

SECTION II

SERIPANDO'S SENSE INTERPRETATION

The study of Seripando's exegetical works enables us to distinguish three different steps taken by him, in exposing the sense of the Epistles of the Apostle:

1. Investigation of the Apostle's mind, in its outlines
2. Personal reflection on the Apostle's doctrine
3. Exposition

In the following three chapters, we will study Seripando's exegesis under these three aspects, with special stress on the rules that guided him, in each of them.

CHAPTER 1

INVESTIGATION OF PAUL'S MIND

In his preface to the Romans and Galatians, Seripando tells Cervini that, in his commentaries he assumed the following method: "*Quanta maxima potui verborum brevitate et perspicuitate, Pauli mentem dilucide explanare conatus sum.*"¹ A little farther, while telling Cervini, how he had provided in his commentaries, for discussions with heretics, Seripando touches again on this central aim of his work. A firm common ground to start discussions with heretics, says he, can be created by an exegete, if, in accomplishing his principal duty, namely *in explaining the mind of the Apostle*, he takes also a special care to accommodate his words to the prejudiced minds of heretics.² Hence, in Seripando's opinion, the first and foremost duty of an exegete is *to expose the mind of the sacred author*.

What does Seripando mean by "*mentem Pauli explanare*"? The answer we have, in what Seripando says below, resuming the idea continued in that very phrase: "*Meas igitur parietes esse existimavi non in verborum delectu elaborare sed sententiarum et rerum mirabilem quamdam et perpetuam in Paulo continuationem seriemque demonstrare, ut alia ex aliis nexa et omnes inter se aptae colligataeque appareant, ad id tendentes quod agit et quo spectat divinus Apostolus.*"³ The last phrase: "*quo spectat divinus Apostolus*" signifies "the scope" of the Apostle. For, immediately after it, Seripando adds: "*Hoc est quod σχολόν Graeci vocant.*" The explanation of Paul's mind, therefore, consists, according to Seripando, in exposing the scope of the Apostle and in demonstrating the wonderful way in which the different parts, namely Paul's sentences and ideas are connected, one with another and all with the scope.

¹Seripando: *In D. Pauli Epistolas ad Romanos et Galatas Commentaria*: p. 8.

²Seripando: *In D. Pauli Epistolas ad Romanos et Galatas Commentaria*: p. 9.

³Seripando: *In D. Pauli Epistolas ad Romanos et Galatas Commentaria*: p. 8.

1. The Apostle's Scope

According to Seripando, there are some strong temptations which an exegete has to encounter, as he comes to the work of sense-interpretation. They are:

1. An inclination to introduce the exegete's personal convictions under the veil of the Apostle's mind,
2. A yearning to seek out opportunities to throw calumnies at his own adversaries with the hands of the Apostle,
3. A longing to justify personal views and actions from the lips of the Apostle.⁴

Seripando shows how easily these temptations had triumphed over the heretics who had taken in hand the work of exegesis. He says that the heretics begin their commentaries well, give an introduction, in a few words and then enter their proper field of explaining themselves under the guise of the sacred author, despising and deriding their adversaries in general and the Catholic Church in particular, and justifying and extolling their own mode of action.⁵

Most probable, Seripando must be alluding here to Luther, who, in his preface to the commentaries of Wessel, said that he had believed that he was the only person left in the world to stand up for the cause of God, as Elias of old. The heretics of ten said, as Luther himself, that they were suffering the persecutions which had been foretold by Christ, as awaiting His followers. This, according to Seripando, is the cunning decree by which the reformers made their commentaries attractive, and seduced even good Catholics.⁶

Seripando denounces this mode of action as a vicious habit. To deviate from the scope of the sacred writer, is a crime in an exegete.⁷ As for himself, he would start his commentaries with a clear statement of the scope of the sacred author.⁸ In the case of St. Paul's Letters, this precaution is imperative, since, as St. Peter remarks, there are some difficult passages which the unlearned and unstable

⁴Seripando: *In D. Pauli Epistoloas ad Romanos et Galatas Commentaria*: pp. 4-7.

⁵Seripando: *In D. Pauli Epistoloas ad Romanos et Galatas Commentaria*: pp. 4-7.

⁶LW 10/1 316 # 2 f.

⁷*Commentaria*: p. 8.

⁸Cfr. *Commentaria*: p. 16 ("Argumentum").

have twisted to their own sense.⁹ To show the importance of this precaution, Seripando prefixes a special '*Praeludium*' to his commentaries on the Romans and Galatians.¹⁰

Having indicated from the words of St. Peter, the presence of difficult passages in St. Paul, the unwarranted handling of which has caused the ruin of many a soul, Seripando assures us that the writings of those passages proceeded from exegetes who were wedded to their personal interests, as were the heretics of his own day, whose main purpose was to make use of Paul's words as weapons against their adversaries, especially the Catholic Church.¹¹

Seripando, on his part, while avowing the presence of difficulties in Paul, that arise from novelty of expressions, digressions, frequent metaphors, apparent inconsistencies, lack of order and unheard of figures, believes that they melt away into insignificance, before one, who starts studying Paul's Letters, in the spirit in which he wrote them.¹²

Seripando proposes to start with that serene spirit which is not awakened by self-interest, but is possessed by the pure love of truth and divine grace. Depending on the assistance of God rather than on the brilliance of his own intellect, he places before himself and his readers, the scope of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, in the words of the great St. Augustine, in whom, as admitted by all, there existed, in the greatest degree, the requirements of an Exegete.¹³ Before starting his commentaries on the Galatians too, Seripando clearly states the apostle's scope.

It may appear rather strange that, in the case of the remaining four epistles, Seripando begins his commentaries straight off, without giving the "*Argumentum*." The apparent excuse is that these works exist only in their rough copies which would hardly have been presented to the public, without the addition of the '*Argumentum*' or even '*Praeludium*'. However, it seems more probable that, even if Seripando had intended publishing them, they would have remained without the '*Argumentum*'. We have Seripando's *Glossa* on the

⁹Cfr. *Commentaria*: p. 14.

¹⁰Cfr. *Commentaria*: pp. 13-16.

¹¹Cfr. *Commentaria*: pp. 14f.

¹²Cfr. *Commentaria*: pp. 14f.

¹³Cfr. *Commentaria*: pp. 15 sq.

Romans which was found among the possessions of Cervini.¹⁴ The *Glossa* was undoubtedly a fair copy intended to be placed before a person of no less dignity than Cardinal Cervini, and yet, it did not contain the ‘*Argumentum*’.

It seems, therefore, more reasonable to believe that Seripando’s mind underwent an evolution under the influence of the circumstances. As a young Platonist, he could not but entertain some sympathy for the reactions of the reformers against the scholastic system. He did really feel, even when old, repugnance for the exaggerated schematisations of the scholastics.¹⁵ Naturally Seripando started his exegetical works with the thought of dispensing with ‘*argumentum*’, ‘*Praeludium*’ or ‘*Prologus*’, as technicalities introduced by scholastics into exegetical works. But judgement matured by experience, forced him to acknowledge the necessity of the ‘customary argument’ (mark his observation ‘customary’)¹⁶ and even of the ‘*Praeludium*’, as is clear from his dedicatory letter and ‘*Praeludium*’, in his last exegetical works namely the Commentaries on the Romans and Galatians.

However, This evolution concerned only the technique of presenting the exegesis, not the elaboration of it, because, from the beginning to the end, Seripando’s guiding star in working out his exegesis on the Epistles of Paul, was the Apostle’s scope as will be clear from what follows.

2. Harmony between the Scope and the Different Parts

The wonderful harmony between Paul’s scope and his words becomes manifest, when the undisturbed flow or continuation of his words and ideas is clearly demonstrated. Hence an exegete’s main concern ought to be in Seripando’s own words: “*sententiarum et rerum mirabilem quamdam et perpetuam in Paulo continuationem seriemque demonstrare.*”¹⁷ The word “*sententia*” in Seripando, may be taken either in the grammatical sense or in the logical sense, as is

¹⁴Codex 378 of the Biblioteca Trivulziana, Milan.

¹⁵Cfr. The Order of the day for the Council of Trent, drawn by Seripando, at the request of Cervini: C. T. II, 419, 15ff.

¹⁶Cfr. *Commentaria*: p. 13.

¹⁷*Commentaria*: p. 8.

clear from what he says in connection with 1 Cor. 3, 1 and 2 Thess. 2, 3.¹⁸

The word: ‘*continuatio*’ too may admit of two significations, as suggested by the sources from which Seripando drew up the whole phrase. Classical studies, as we know, had to be set apart by Seripando, when more serious affairs absorbed his attention. However, he did not abandon classical authors altogether. He sought their help even in his commentaries. Virgil, the ‘*poeta noster*’, is quoted twice in the Romans. (9, 9; 9, 27).¹⁹ Cicero is still Seripando’s esteemed philosopher, and he is quoted profusely in connection with Rom. 7, 7. Here, in our case, the phrase: “*sententiarum et rerum mirabilem quamdam et perpetuam in Paulo continuationem seriemque demonstrare,*” is obviously a well-thought out combination of the two Ciceronian phrases: “*Admirabilis quaedam continuatio seriesque rerum*” (1 Nat. D. 4, 9) and “*immutabilis continuatio ordinis sempiterni*” (The word ‘*immutabilis*’ is replaced by ‘*perpetua*’, probably to make it rhyme with ‘*r*’ recurring in the preceding words and with ‘*p*’ “in the phrase that immediately follows it).

According to Cicero, ‘*continuatio*’ in the first case, means the uninterrupted connection of the different parts in a whole, on account of which the parts appear necessary and sufficient, in their own places, for the formation of a harmonious system. In the second case, ‘*continuatio*’ means the prolonged and perpetual sustenance of a system already existing.

That Seripando, in his preface, did intend to give the above-mentioned double significations to ‘*sententia*’ as well as ‘*continuatio*’, is evidenced by the fact that, in his commentaries, he strives to demonstrate, not only the uninterrupted connection of sentence with sentence but also that of idea with idea, and again, not only the continuous flow of sentences and ideas but also the perpetual stability of Pauline ideas and of the series of facts that form their basis.

¹⁸Explaining 1 Cor. 3, 1 Seripando uses the word ‘*sententia*’ in the grammatical sense; the same word he uses, in explaining 2 Thess. 2, 3, with the signification of ‘idea’, ‘opinion’. Ms. Nap. VII A. 36, 2 Thess. 2, 3 (c. II. M. I).

¹⁹*Commentaria*: pp. 162, 168.

2.1. The Flow of Words and Ideas

The coherent and harmonious disposition of the different sentences, ideas and facts in Paul's Epistles, is demonstrated by Seripando, by a study of the text and context, in the light of the historical background, the psychology and peculiar style of Paul, the condition of his readers, and his parallel utterances, within and without, the Epistles dealt with.

One would think that Seripando, whose aim was to show the marvellous harmony of part with part and parts with the whole, would have found no other procedure better than that of the Schoolmen. The Schoolmen had made an advance on Patristic exegesis, in this: that they used, first of all, to view the book as a whole and then to descend into its different parts, till the minutest elements of the text.²⁰ This analytical method rendered valuable help to the exegete to discover the literal and hence the genuine sense of the Bible. But some of the schoolmen had driven this method, into its extremes bringing in: "all kinds of subdichotomies, objections, solutions, definitions, conclusions, corollaries, propositions and distinctions"²¹ at which the sacred author himself would have marvelled. The consequence was a kind of repugnance for the system as a whole. The leaders of the Reformation had made no secret of their hatred for the scholastic system which depended too much on the Aristotelian categories.²² Seripando could not be insensible to this reaction. He himself, being a Platonist, had not much sympathy for the Aristotelians.²³

Perhaps it was this want of sympathy that dissuaded him from adopting from the schoolmen, what could be immensely helpful to his principal duty in the exegetical work. The analytical procedure, if kept in its proper limits, would have demonstrated, better than any other, the harmonious texture of Pauline literature. At least,

²⁰Cfr. A. Vaccari: "S. Tommaso e Lutero nella Storia dell'Esegesi" in *Civiltà Cattolica* 1935, pp. 36-47.

²¹Cfr. F. W. Farrar: "The Exegesis of the Schoolmen" in *The Expositor*, London, Second Series vol. VII (1886) 68 f.

²²Luther, in his "*Resolutiones super propositionibus Lipsiae disputatis*" speaks of the Scholastics with contempt.

²³Cfr. C.T. V. 672, 19f.

Seripando could have, prefixed, with great advantage, a general prospectus of the Epistle which he was beginning to comment on.

As time went on, Seripando might have acknowledged the advantage of such a system, in order to realize the ideal of his exegesis, and a further work could have crystallized that acknowledgement; but we have no work of Seripando that records this further evolution of his mind.

Seripando's method is, to start straight off with the words of the Apostle. As we go on reading, Seripando would help us to perceive the connection and continuation. When we pronounce the very first word or phrase, he stops us, provides us with the information the passage presupposes, namely the historical background, Paul's psychology or the condition of his readers, so that we see Paul's words beautifully fitting in with the context, and feel a natural flow of word from word and idea from idea, as he places before us the whole passage or part of it, in a conspicuous manner. In the '*Glossa*' Seripando's explanations are put within brackets so that the text is always clear and conspicuous. In the I Cor., the sacred text is written in erect characters and the explanations are given in slightly slanting ones. In the 2 Cor., and both the Thess., Paul's words are marked by underlines, while, in the Romans and Galatians, they are put in bold capital letters.

Then follow the explanation of the sentence, the exact sense of the words, illustrations from Paul himself or from other sacred authors and ecclesiastical writers, and the solution of difficulties that could not be forestalled in the introduction. This, in general, is how the connection of each passage with the preceding and the following, and of all, with the main scope of the Apostle, is demonstrated by Seripando.

2.1.1. The Flow of Sentences

2.1.1.1. Digressions to Be Taken into Account

Seripando's effort to demonstrate the uninterrupted flow of sentences, is more felt, where difficulties of construction occur. One of the principal sources of the break of continuity in Paul, according to Seripando, is his frequent digressions.²⁴ The digressions are, by no means, useless. They touch upon many mysteries which throw more light on Paul's principal theme. If Paul were to give greater

²⁴*Commentaria: Praeludium* p. 14.

importance to clarity and plainness of style, he ought to have passed over in silence many such mysteries. Let us take the case of the very first passage of the Romans:

*Si Paulus nulla facta traiectione, post illa quatuor (i.e., Paulus, servus Jesu Christi, vocatus Apostolus, segregatus in Evangelium Dei) quae de seipso dixit, statim addidisset: ‘Omnibus qui Romae estis etc.’, plane locutus fuisset et aperte, moremque sequutus esset salutandi per Epistolam usitatum, tritum, quotidianum, sed multa tacuisset mysteria, quae propterea interposuit, ut duo illa, quae de seipso dixerat, explicatione evaderent, “quorum alterum est”: ‘Segregatus in Evangelium Dei’, alterum vero: ‘vocatus Apostolus’.*²⁵

If we look from Paul’s point of view, we will see that his digressions are not only useful, but often necessary. Seripando convinces us of this, when he takes up the last portion of the salutation of the Romans: “*Omnibus : post traiectiones istas magnopere necessarias ut Epistola haec, tanquam Apostolica, evangelica, et veram, ac sanetam doctrinam continens exciperetur, agnoscereturque non esse privati alicujus hominis, sed legati Jesu Christi, salutationem perfecit.*”²⁶

2.1.1.2. Obscure Connections to Be Cleared Up

Another chief source of the apparent break of continuity in Paul’s words, are his expressions which are often obscure. Paul’s expressions often suppose many things as understood. Unless these things are supplied, Paul’s literature will remain obscure and his phrases and sentences will seem to be disconnected, or to be lacking in harmony. We may bring Rom. 8, 3f. as an illustration in point: These verses, as they lie, are not clear, “*Nam quod impossibile erat legi, in quo infirmabatur per carnem, Deus filium suum mittens in similitudinem carnis peccati et de peccato damnavit peccatum in carne, ut justificatio legis impleretur in nobis qui non secundum carnem ambulamus, sed secundum Spiritum.*”

In his *Glossa*, Seripando supplies what is understood in the different expressions and demonstrates the continuation:

²⁵*Commentaria*: p.18 # 2. The explanations given in brackets are ours.

²⁶*Commentaria*: p. 21 # 2.

*Nam quod impossibile erat legi / quae morbum tantum et minas ostendebat sanare id in quo / genus humanum / infirmabatur per carnem, Deus filium suum mittens in similitudinem carnis peccati / sanavit / et de peccato / (liceat hic improprie ita loqui) damnavit peccatum in carne ut justificatio / promissa per observantiam / legis impleretur in nobis qui non secundum carnem ambulamus, sed secundum Spiritum / nam sicut peccatum jure ante regnabat in homine, quem sibi voluntarie obtemperantem servum fecisset, ita postquam Filius Dei carnem assumpsit absque peccato cujus expers omnino semper fuit, licet similis nobis esse videretur, damnavit apud divinum tribunal, justo quidem judicio, peccatum ipsum in carne sua propria quod innocentam illum pro nocente haberi et saevissimae morti tradi curasset. Quare victo jam a Christo et triumphato peccato, et chirographo antiquo deleto, victus in victorem, aut in ejus membra, jus amplius dominandi, non habet. Ac proinde nihil nunc prohibet, quominus illi qui sunt in Christo Jesu et in spiritu vivunt, non autem in carne, legis justificationem et hereditatis promissionem non consequantur.*²⁷

Such digressions and passages containing: “*dicendi formae figuraeque Latinis, Graecis fortassis etiam Hebraeis auribus inauditas,*”²⁸ are not rare in the Epistles of Paul. Hence, Seripando rightly considers it part of the Exegete’s main concern to demonstrate the flow of sentences.

2.1.2. The Flow of Thought

Seripando’s effort to demonstrate the flow of the Apostle’s thought also, is more felt where apparent interruptions occur. Sometimes the transition of an idea from another is veiled in new words or obscure phrases, in ambiguities, figurative language or digressions. Such passages call for the exegete’s special attention.

²⁷Codex Trivulzian: 378 f. 29v f.

²⁸*Commentaria: Praeludium*, p. 14.

2.1.2.1. Obscure Expressions to Be Clarified

Terms like Gospel, 'the Law', 'Faith', 'Grace', 'Justice', 'the flesh', 'the spirit', 'to predestine', 'to harden' etc., have significations typically Pauline.²⁹ Paul's peculiar style also, has to be taken into account. Thus, while handling Rom. 9, 18 ('*Ergo cujus vult miseretur et quem vult indurat*'), Seripando says that the second part of the verse ('*quem vult indurat*'), brings in confusion because of the novelty of Paul's expression. According to the mind of Paul, "*quem vult indurat*" does not mean that God positively hardens the heart of somebody. God is said to harden those whom he does not wish to call.³⁰ The same care has to be employed in dealing with Rom. 11, 8 and 14, 5.³¹ Rom. 6, 5 and 9, 21 offer difficulties as to the exact nature of the sequence of one idea from the other. Seripando takes special care in these places to unveil the real trend of the Apostle's thought.³²

2.1.2.2. Ambiguous Terms to Be Defined

In Rom. 7, 1 there arises some difficulty from the ambiguous term: 'death'. What kind of death does St. Paul intend to express? Seripando writes: "*Neque vero laborandum hoc loco est qua de morte loquatur Apostolus, sive legis quae est ejus abrogatio, sive hominis; nihil enim prohibet ambiguum hunc sermonem in utramque sententiam interpretari.*"³³ Then he shows how either sense, does in fact, sustain the flow of Pauline thought.

2.1.2.3. Figurative Language to Be Explained

Where Paul's figurative language creates difficulty to follow his line of thought, Seripando is particularly attentive. This is the case in Rom. 8, 20, where Paul speaks of the sigh of the creatures, and in 2 Thess. 2, 7, where the Apostle deals with the one who is to be "put out of the way" ('*de medio tollatur*').³⁴ Further illustrations

²⁹Of these terms, we will speak, in Part II of our work.

³⁰Seripando is speaking, here, of the special call, as distinguished from the common call extended to all. Cfr. *Commentaria*: pp.162 f.

³¹Cfr. *Commentaria*: pp. 186 f. and 231 # 2.

³²Cfr. *Commentaria*: pp. 92 f. and 165.

³³Cfr. *Commentaria*: p. 103.

³⁴Cfr. *Commentaria*: p. 104 and Ms. Nap. VII A 36, 2 Thess. 2, 7 (C. II, n. III).

may be found where Seripando treats of Gal. 4, 22-27 and Rom 13, 12.³⁵

2.1.2.4. Digressions to Be Taken into Consideration

Digressions which break off the flow of ideas, are noted by Seripando and supplied with sufficient explanations, as can be seen in Rom. 9, 22 where he says: "*Revertitur (ut mihi videtur) ad suam illam insignem et praeclaram conclusionem, unde humanae temeritatis audaciae refrenandae curiosarumque et inutilium quaestionum amputandarum gratia, digressus fuerat.*"³⁶ Dealing with the subsequent passage, Seripando writes:

*Tu vero qui Paulum prudenter legis cursum sustine et animadvertes hoc illud esse quamobrem locum hunc obscurum, mancum et explicatu difficilem dixi quia non statim perfecit sententiam, sed connexi partem quam proposuit, imperfectam reliquit, ad ea digrediens qua de vasis misericordiae declarare oportebat legentis animum suspensum, et quae altera esset connexi pars ignorantem dimittens.*³⁷

2.1.3. Positive Measures

Thus far, about the negative means Seripando uses to demonstrate the flow of thought. Equally interesting is the study of the positive measures he takes to the same effect. The exposition of the historical background, Paul's psychology and the condition of Paul's readers, timely recapitulations and clarifications of the logical sequence of thought, are the main headings to which we can reduce them.

2.1.3.1. Placing the Passage in Its Historical Background

Historical facts that influenced the Apostle's words were frequently referred to, by Seripando. The one sense with which Seripando is busy, is the historico-literal one. Hence, wherever historical data can be produced, he produces them, and where he cannot find them, he confesses that he does not find the details

³⁵Cfr. *Commentaria*: pp. 319-322 and p. 286.

³⁶Cfr. *Commentaria*: pp. 166 f.

³⁷Cfr. *Commentaria*: p. 167 also Rom. 7, 14; 9, 30; 1 Cor. 14, 1; 2 Cor. 1, 21; 6, 3. Ms. Nap. VII A 36: 1 Cor. 14, 1 (C. XIII, n. 1).

supposed by the Apostle's words, described elsewhere, with exactitude.

Quotations from and references to the historical books, especially to the Acts of the Apostles, frequently occur in Seripando's commentaries. Acts of the Apostles is referred to, 18 times, in his commentary on the Romans, 16 times, in that on the Galatians, 15 times, in those to the Corinthians and 16 times, in those on the Thessalonians. The study of history makes Seripando enter into the spirit of the Apostle, and see in his words, the end to which they were directed. Thus, at the beginning of the 2nd chapter of the Galatians, he writes:

Quatuor erant quae falsi apud Galatas Apostoli absentis Paulo, in magnis criminibus objiciebant. Primum quod de legatione et suo Evangelio magnificentius jactaret, qui neque jus legationis neque Evangelium a Christo Domino accepisset unquam. Alterum quod de quaestione legis et Evangelii, non idem atque idem sentiret cum primariis et excellentibus Apostolis, de quibus constabat inter omnes a Christo Doctore summo, omnibus de rebus edoctos fuisse. Tertium quod ejus verba rebus esse contraria viderentur: legem enim abrogabat et Timotheum circumcidebat, de caeremoniis detrahebat et Nazaraeorum ritum Cenchrus primum raso capillo, deinde Hierosolymis (auctore Jacobo) cum aliis quatuor viris, ex legis consuetudine expiatus, summa religione servabat. Postremum quod praecellentibus Apostolis se exaequare atque etiam repugnare non vereretur, qui a principio in Christi gremio atque sermone fuerant educati, Ecclesiae Dei numquam infesti aut inimici, in quorum sive dictis sive factis, perpetua extiterat constantia, firmitas, perseverantia. Et primam quidem criminationem satis superque rejecit ac falsam esse convicit ex illis quae illi in vita contigerant, tam antea quam in illa ipsa sua repentina et admirabili conversione necnon aliquot postea subsequentibus annis. Ad alias nunc depellendas accedit ex fideli

*similiter earum rerum narratione quae secundum ea illi acciderant.*³⁸

2.1.3.2. Light Sought from Pauline Psychology and Style

Pauline psychology and the consequent peculiarity of style are brought forward by Seripando, in order to catch and follow the line of thought in Paul's Epistles. The connection of the first part of the 10th chapter of the Romans with Chapter 9 is easily perceptible to one who enters into the soul of Paul and feels with him. Seripando writes:

*Priusquam de gentium divina electione et maximae Judaeorum partis rejectione disserere coepisset, mirabilem atque incredibilem in Judaeos charitatem declaravit prudentissimus et electissimus Apostolus, adeoque magnam et ardentem et anathema a Christo Jesu pro illorum salute se unum esse optaverit, rem indignam existimans eum perire populum qui tot insignitus et ornatus esse divinis praerogativis atque muneribus. Cum autem in ea disputatione dixerit Judaeos a vera justitiae via aberrasse et in lapidem offensionis incurrisse, ne infenso id animo atque inimico dixisse putaretur, novo rursus argumento suum erga Judaeos amorem declarat, eorum salutem, quamquam a Christo tantopere essent alieni, a se non negligi, cum et eam propense expeteret et assiduis a Deo precibus posceret. Inquit autem: Fratres...*³⁹

2.1.3.3. Light Sought from the Psychology of Paul's Readers

The psychology of Paul's readers too, frequently brought forward by Seripando to demonstrate the flow of Pauline thought. We may produce many passages in illustration of this point, such as Rom. 1, 13; 2, 17; 2, 19; 3, 21; 4, 1; 4, 4; 6, 1.⁴⁰ For specimen's sake

³⁸ *Commentaria*: p. 284. Cfr. Also: Rom. 14, 1; 1 Cor. 11, 2-11; 2 Cor. 8, 18; 10, 1.

³⁹ *Commentaria*: p. 173. Cfr. Also: Rom. 1, 8; 1, 9; 1, 11; 1, 13; 3, 5; 3, 9; 6, 5; 6, 15; 7, 12; 9, 5; 9, 6; 9, 22-25; 10, 11; 11, 13 f; 11, 19; 11, 20; 12, 1; 13, 8; 14, 1; 15, 1; 15, 14; 1 Cor. 3, 1; 9, 1; 10, 14-15; 12, 4; 14, 18; 2 Cor. 4, 3; 4, 7-11; 5, 12; 5, 14; 6, 14; 8, 8; 10, 16; 11, 1; 12, 13; 13, 1; Gal. 1, 1; 1, 5; 3, 1; 3, 5; 3, 19; 4, 10; 4, 12; 6, 1. 1 Thess. 1, 1.

⁴⁰ Cfr. Also 1 Cor. 10, 23; 12, 1; 14, 36; 15, 1; 15, 32; 1 Thess. 5, 1.

we quote here, what Seripando writes in the beginning of Rom 14: “*Erant inter Romanos ad quos hanc Paulus scripsit Epistolam, variae quaedam de legis mandatis ac ritibus opiniones, controversiae et disceptationes, de quibus ita contendebant ut vinci alii ab aliis nulla ratione paterentur. Eas nunc sedare et comprimere ex divina quadam Spiritus sancti disciplina studet...*”⁴¹

2.1.3.4. Recapitulations

Recapitulations (Rom. 2, 17; 2, 25; 3, 21; 5, 1; 8, 31; 9, 1; 9, 10; 13, 1; 15, 7),⁴² and timely glances at the main theme (Rom. 4, 1; 4, 9; 7, 21; 8, 9; 8, 33; 8, 35)⁴³ are made by Seripando, in order to make clear the connection of major parts with minor ones, and of all with the main theme.

2.1.3.5. Natural Reasoning

Sometimes Seripando makes use of natural reasoning, to show the logical sequence of one idea from another. It is thus that he shows in Rom. 7, 7 that, if we follow exactly the line of Pauline thought, we have to conclude that even non-deliberate movements of concupiscence are sins, in the real sense of the word.⁴⁴ The same way, he logically argues, regarding the connection of faith with justice in Pauline thought (Rom. 10, 10).⁴⁵

Thus, throughout his exegesis, Seripando follows the rule of flow as an efficacious means to discover the Apostle’s mind. The negative or positive measures he assumes towards the attainment of his ideal appear in one form or other, practically, in his treatment of every passage of the Apostle’s writings.

2.2. The Stability of Paul’s Ideas

2.2.1. Stability Presupposed

Stability of Pauline ideas is a *suppositum* of Seripando. So when he speaks of the demonstration of the stability of Pauline ideas, in the preface, he does not mean that he is going to prove that Paul’s

⁴¹ *Commentaria*: p. 228.

⁴² Cfr. Also Rom. 5, 12; 7, 7; 7, 25; 8, 28; 1 Cor. 10, 1; 2 Cor. 1, 8; 3, 1; 6, 11; 8, 16; 9, 1; 10, 7; Gal. 2, 21; 4, 30-31; 1 Thess. 4, 1.

⁴³ Cfr. Gal. 5, 1.

⁴⁴ *Commentaria*: p. 108.

⁴⁵ *Commentaria*: p. 171.

ideas remain the same everywhere, but that he is going to point out instances which illustrate the already acknowledged constancy of Paul’s ideas.

The ground, on which his supposition rests, is the conviction that Paul’s words are the words of the Holy Ghost Himself. Hence attributing inconsistency to Paul’s ideas would mean admitting that the Holy Ghost contradicts Himself.

2.2.2. Exegete’s Duty: To Demonstrate the Stability

Seripando thinks that an exegete’s duty is to demonstrate the stability of Pauline ideas. We will just quote a passage where Seripando acquits himself of this duty. Rom. 3, 28 does not seem to fit in with the idea expressed by Paul, in Rom. 2, 13. Hence, while dealing with the former passage, Seripando writes: “*Sed hanc Puli verissimam sapientissimamque sententiam, ad ea quae de gravissima ista quaestione hac supra scripsit conferamus, ne quis in Apostoli imo Spiritus Sancti dictis aliquam introducere audeat repugnantiam.*”⁴⁶

Seripando solves the difficulty, showing that in Rom. 2, 13, Paul does not affirm that, by the works of the law, men are, in fact, justified, but that the persuasion of the Jews that by hearing the Law regularly recited in the synagogues, they had done everything, in order to be just, in the sight of God, was an illusion, since it was not the hearing of the Law that counted, but the doing of it: “*Non auditores legis justi sunt apud Deum sed factores legis justificabuntur*” (Rom. 2, 13). But Paul himself asserts that this doing of the Law, is an impossibility for a man who is devoid of faith: “*Ex operibus legis non justificabitur omnis caro coram Deo*” (Rom. 3, 20; *Caro* means, here, man devoid of faith). Then he concludes: “*Quid autem his duobus dictis adeo consentaneum esse potest, ut illa quam paulo ante de hac tota controversia dixit: “Arbitra hominem justificari per fidem sine operibus legis”?*”⁴⁷

2.2.3. The Law of Stability and the Flow of Ideas

As the law of stability helps the exegete to verify the results of his labour, done under the guidance of the law of flow, so it comes to his help in places where obscure terminologies apparently impede

⁴⁶ *Commentaria*: p. 59 f.

⁴⁷ *Commentaria*: p. 60.

the flow of the Apostle's thought. In such passages he can confidently seek light from other passages in Paul, where the same idea is expressed in clearer terms. After having explained the idea contained in the rather difficult phrase: '*de fide in fidem*' (Rom 1, 17),⁴⁸ Seripando seeks light from a clearer passage: "*quod non hoc solum loco docet Paulus sed aliis quoque locis et clarius, praesertim cum dicit: "Per fidem ambulamus, supercrescit fides vestra, confirmati in fidem"* (2 Cor. 5; 2 Thess. 1).⁴⁹ He does the same way, in dealing with Rom. 1, 4; 2, 13; 3, 5; 4, 13; 5, 2; 5, 12; 7, 4; 9, 11; 10, 3; 10, 10; 11, 36; 14, 9; 14, 20; 14, 21.⁵⁰

2.2.4. Interchanging Phrases from Parallel Passages

The stability of Pauline ideas, is so clear, that passages treating of the same idea, can be interchanged; what is wanting in one passage, may be supplied from another, whether it be as to details, as is done by Seripando in connection with Rom. 1, 1; 1, 13; 1, 16; 1, 22; 5, 8; 8, 5; 8, 29; 8, 32; 7, 9; 11, 1; 11, 13; 11, 22; 11, 23; 11, 30; 12, 8; 15, 23; 15, 24;⁵¹ or as to reasons (Rom. 1, 1; 1, 32; 2, 13; 5, 3; 7, 8; 8, 3; 8, 29; 9, 4; 12, 8; 16, 25-29⁵² or as to consequences (Rom. 1, 1; 1, 25; 4, 5; 5, 1; 9, 9; 9, 11; 10, 4; 11, 33; 14, 10; 15, 6; 16, 19.⁵³

⁴⁸Commentaria: p. 26 # 2.

⁴⁹Commentaria: p. 26 # 2.

⁵⁰Cfr. Also: 1 Cor. 1, 21; 10, 21; 11, 1; 11, 11-16; 13, 2-3; 13, 23; 15, 10; 15, 21; 15, 51; 2 Cor. 3, 6; 5, 9; 6, 3; 6, 6; 11, 29; 13, 4; 13, 10; Gal. 2, 15; 3, 1-3; 3, 12; 3, 19; 4, 6; 4, 13-14; 4, 26; 5, 2; 5, 21; 1 Thess. 1, 6; 3, 3; 4, 14; 5, 15; 5, 21; 2 Thess. 1, 19; 2, 3; 2, 13.

⁵¹Cfr. Also: 1 Cor. 9, 25; 15, 52; 2 Cor. 2, 3; 2, 14; 2, 17; 4, 4; 5, 4; 6, 5; 6, 6; 6, 14; 6, 18; 7, 1; 7, 5; 9, 6; 10, 2; 11, 6-7; 11, 23; 12, 2; 12, 21; 13, 10; Gal. 1, 4; 2, 19; 3, 1; 3, 3; 3, 8; 3, 10-11; 3, 18-19; 3, 22; 4, ; 4, 7-9; 4, 19; 4, 28; 5, 11; 5, 14; 5, 16-17; 5, 19;-20; 5, 22-23; 6, 2; 6, 13; 6, 15; 6, 17. 1 Thess. 1, 3; 1, 6; 2, 5; 2, 9-10; 3, 13; 4, 14-17; 5, 2; 5, 8; 5, 14-16; 5, 21; 5, 23; 2 Thess. 1, 9; 2, 2-3; 2, 8; 2, 14; 3, 6; 3, 8; 3, 14; 3, 16.

⁵²Cfr. Also: 1 Cor. 10, 19; 14, 34; 2 Cor. 2, 12; 10, 16; Gal. 2, 20; 4, 23-24; 4, 28; 4, 31; 5, 22; 1 Thess. 1, 2; 2 Thess. 1, 8; 3, 5.

⁵³Cfr. aso: 1 Cor. 12, 13; 2 Cor. 4, 13; 4, 33; 5, 15; 13, 1; Gal. 4, 8; 5, 24; 6, 14; 1Thess. 4, 14; 5, 9; 5, 16; 5, 23.

2.3. Conclusion

In his search for the mind of Paul, there are two fundamental rules that govern Seripando's labours: the rule of flow and the rule of stability. The rule of flow, by itself, is not a sure guide; it receives help from the rule of stability, to have its results checked and to proceed with ease, in places where obscurities obstruct the passage.

CHAPTER 2

PERSONAL REFLECTION ON THE APOSTLE'S DOCTRINE

Having discovered the Apostle's thought in their outlines, Seripando begins the labour which was dear to his heart – deeper speculations on the Apostle's mind. As we know, Seripando had begun his exegetical works, with a set purpose. He was conscious of the unrest caused by the Evangelists and the Reformers, who had rejected the essential tenets of the Catholic Church regarding the doctrine of original sin, faith, predestination and justification, as non-Pauline or non-Biblical. Even some of the best minds of the Catholics, had been won over by the captious arguments of the heretics.

The one efficacious means to cope with the circumstance, was to enter deep into the Apostle's mind and to show how the Catholic doctrine was, in fact, Pauline and Biblical. Luther too had, in mind, the same scope when he wrote his commentary on the Galatians. In its preface he says: "*Unum spectavi si consequar ut mea opera ii qui me Apostolicas epistolas audierunt enarrantem Paulum apertioem habeant et feliciter me superent. Sin nec id effeci age et hoc habens perdidit laboris; conatus reliquus est quo alios ad Paulinam theologiam volui accendere quem nemo bonus mihi vitio dederit.*"⁵⁴ However, while Luther, exaggerating Paul's mind in some aspects caused souls to disregard it in other aspects, and brought untold misery on the Christian world, Seripando kept the right balance and offered to the world commentaries, "*quibus et haereses doctissime refelluntur et Apostoli sensus pura elegantia aperitur.*"⁵⁵ The reason for this difference is to be sought in the respective norms that guided the one and the other, in their deeper speculations on the mind of the Apostle.

⁵⁴LW 2/ p. 449, 27-31.

⁵⁵*Commentaria*: Naples Edition 1601. The title: "*Hieronymmi Seripandi S.R.E. Card. In D. Pauli Epistolas ad Romanos et Galatas commentaria quibus et haereses doctissime refelluntur et Apostoli sensus pura elegantia aperitur.*"

The leader of the Reformation as well as his followers had no definite norm to guide them, but their own imagination, in interpreting Holy Scripture. "Whatever comes to the mind of these men, they attribute to Paul," says Seripando.⁵⁶

1. The Authority of the Church

As for Seripando, he would first of all, submit everything he has written and his whole self, to the divine authority and judgment of the Catholic Church.⁵⁷ This humble disposition which seeks to be guided by the authority of the Church, in one's speculations on the words of holy Scripture, had been denounced by the heretics as an intellectual slavery, contrary to the mind of the Apostle who had anathematised himself and even angels from heaven, who might venture to preach a doctrine, different from the one already handed down.⁵⁸ In his resolutions regarding the propositions discussed at Leipsig, Luther writes: "*Hic advertamus Apostolum (Rom. 7, 22sq.): cedant huic ratio et auctoritas sive Ecclesiae sive Concilii quoniam hic docetur cujus contrarium, si angelus de coelo docuerit, non credam.*"⁵⁹ Such submission to the Church, had been branded as alien to the mind of Christ Himself who, it was said, counselled the people who were searching for truth, to scrutinize the Scriptures. The first Christians, for example, the Boereans, thought it to be prudent not to be too credulous to the Apostle, and to weigh his words in the balance of the Scriptures. There were, besides, the words of St. Augustine which stood against such a submission of one's judgment to that of the Church. St. Augustine said that even the most learned and holy man might go wrong whereas Holy Scriptures, which were called canonical, could contain no error, no lie.⁶⁰

In his *Quaestio Quarta*,⁶¹ on passages from the Galatians, Seripando ably handles the matter, showing where and how the

⁵⁶*Commentaria: Quaestio Quarta*, p. 350, # 1.

⁵⁷*Commentaria*: p. 203.

⁵⁸Cfr. *Commentaria: Quaestio Quarta: Argumentum haeticorum*: pp. 356 sq.

⁵⁹LW 2/ *Resolutiones Lutherenianae super propositionibus suis Lipsiae disputatis* 1519: p. 412, 11-13.

⁶⁰Cfr. *Commentaria Queastio* 4: p. 354.

⁶¹Cfr. *Commentaria Queastio* 4: pp. 356-362.

heretics went wrong, in interpreting the passages from Scripture, on which they base these arguments. The authority they bring from Augustine is thrown into their own faces. Nobody denies, says Seripando, that there could be no error or lie in Holy Scripture and that in other authors, however eminent in knowledge or sanctity, may creep in errors and lies. But, how is it, he asks, that these heretics who give so much importance to the above passage of Augustine, are insensible to the gentleness, moderation, upright manners and religious sentiments of the same holy Father who counts his books, not in the first place which he reserves exclusively to Holy Scripture, but in the second, in which he confesses himself liable to falls, errors and deceptions? He, then, brings forwards the following passages from Augustine which the heretics were seeking to elude:

*Ego vero Evangelio non crederem nisi me Catholicae Ecclesiae commoveret auctoritas. (Con. Ep. Fun. C.5) Quamvis rei alicujus certe de Scripturis cononicis non proferatur exemplum, carundem tamen scripturarum etiam in hac re a nobis tenetur veritas, cum hoc facimus quod universae jam placuit Ecclesiae quam ipsarum Scripturarum commendat auctoritas, ut quoniam Sancta Scriptura fallere non potest, quisquis falli metuit alicujus obscuritate quaestionis eandem Ecclesiam de illa consulat, quam sine ulla ambiguitate sancta scriptura demonstrat.*⁶²

In the same “*Quaestio Quarta*,” Seripando clearly defines and indicates the God given power of the Church regarding the word of God. This power, he says, is of a double nature, in as much as it authorizes the church to fix up the Canon of Holy scripture and to judge of the genuine interpretations and explanations of the word of God, especially when there appear interpretations which seem to break or shake off the usages of faith and morals or the ordinances of the holy Fathers confirmed by long custom, or when, there appear new doctrines and renewals of error.⁶³

One would think that Seripando, the active theologian of the council of Trent, might have many references to make, in his

⁶²*Commentaria Quaestio 4*: p. 361

⁶³*Commentaria Quaestio 4*: pp. 357-359.

Commentaries, to the decisions or discussions of the Council, regarding the texts of St. Paul. It is beyond doubt that Seripando retouched his exegesis on the Romans, after the first period of the Council.⁶⁴ But Seripando makes no reference at all, to that Council. The only reference he makes to a Council, in his Commentaries, is to that of Elvira, for a testimony to the usage alluded to, by the Apostle, in 1 Cor. 15, 29 (“*baptizari pro mortuis*”).⁶⁵ There is another reference he makes to the usage of the Church, namely to its liturgy of the 18th Sunday after Pentecost, in order to show how the conviction that, without God’s help, it is impossible to please Him, is beautifully expressed by the Church in her prayer: “*Tibi sine te placere non possumus*” (commentary on Rom. 8, 8).⁶⁶

Seripando’s determination to expose the mind of the Apostle, in as few words as possible, on the one hand, and his desire to accommodate his exposition to the heretics who were prejudiced against the authority of the Church, on the other, seems to have induced him to abstain from producing the authority of the Church where it was not necessary.

2. The Authority of the Fathers

The heretics could not suffer the voice of the Fathers to interfere with the creations of their imagination. Luther, in his defence against the judgement of Eck, gives vent to the following irony: *Quorum* (i.e., of Eck + his companions) *unus mos est dicere, ‘sancti sic direrunt’, numquid tu major es patres nostro Abraham?’*⁶⁷ The Reformers, as a rule, placed themselves on a level with Paul and considered the arguments brought against them from the unanimous voice of the Fathers, as similar to the arguments brought against Paul, from the authority of Peter and the other Apostles, by the false doctors of the Galatians. Hence, after the example of Paul, they gave their verdict: “*Sive Cyprianus, Ambrosius, Augustinus sive Petrus, Paulus, Joannes, sive Angelus de coelo, aliter ac nos docuerint,*

⁶⁴In the Commentary on the Romans, which he wrote before the *Quaestiones*, we find references to the latter. Cfr. *Commentaria*: p. 176.

⁶⁵Ms. Nap. VII A. 36 C XV n. IX.

⁶⁶*Commentaria*: p. 126.

⁶⁷L. W. 2/ *Contra malignum Johannis Eccil judicium super aliquot articulis a fratribus quibusdam eis suppositae Martini Lutheri defensio* 1519, p. 626, 31-33.

doceantve certum tamen nobis est et exploratum quod divina suademus non humana, quae tam animo videmus quam ea quae oculis cernimus."⁶⁸

In the face of such argumentations, Seripando's blood gets heated. How can the heretics consider themselves equal to Paul, who was appointed by God a preacher, Apostle and teacher of the Gentiles, in faith and truth? How can they consider themselves superior to all the Fathers, of whom, some gave testimony to the faith by the shedding of their blood, others, innocent in life and morals, and being called by God, administered the churches and always fought, with courage, against the heretics, in defence of the Church, and for the salvation of souls? These men, who assumed the ministry of the word, authorized by no vocation, by no valid testimony, by no supernatural ordinance, these venture with pertinacity, to condemn and keep down the above mentioned men!⁶⁹

Seripando lays bare the flaw in the argumentation of the heretics: The first flaw consists in this: that, in the passage concerned, St. Paul does not treat of what they attribute to him; the second flaw is that they use Paul's words with deteriorating alterations. Seripando wonders how the heretics could really be induced to reject the unanimous voice of the Fathers, by the force of the above mentioned passage (Gal.1, 9) in Paul. He gives us the conclusion he had arrived at, after reflections on this point. It is not the words of Paul, but their own caprice that induced them to take that step. For, in the beginning of the split, when their odium rested principally on the authority of the Pope and on that of the more recent theologians, they appealed with great clamour, to the Councils and to the Fathers. But, as soon as they perceived that their doctrine was, in fact, alien to the pure teaching of the Fathers and the holy ordinances of the Councils, they rejected these very authorities whom they had chosen as final judges in the cause.⁷⁰

Seripando's "*Quaestio Sexta*" is entirely devoted to open the eyes of those who reject or slight the authority of the united voice of the Fathers. In the end of the treatise, he brings in the authority of

⁶⁸These are the words of the heretics, as collected by Seripando. *Quaestio sexta: Argumentum hereticorum*, p. 366 # 2.

⁶⁹*Commentaria*, pp. 366 f.

⁷⁰*Commentaria, Quaestio sexta*, pp. 367 f.

St. Augustine, whom the Protestants still venerated. Augustine was fighting against the Pelagians resting on the authority of the Scriptures. But the Pelagians soon began to interpret the words of scripture, in their own way, bending and twisting the sense of the divine word, to their own erroneous tenets. In this plight, the holy Doctor speaks of the authority of the holy Bishops of the whole Orient and Occident. The following is the way Augustine argues:

*Omnes iudices ab odio, amicitia, inimicitia, ira vacuos esse decet. Pauci tales poterunt inveniri, sed patres quos commemoravi, tales fuisse credendum est. Verum, etsi tales non fuerunt in hic causis quas ad se delatas et inter partes cognitatas cum hic viverent, suo iudicio definierunt, ad hanc tamen causam tales erant. Quando de illa sententia protuberunt, nullas nobiscum vel vobiscum amicitias attenderunt, vel inimicitias exereuerunt; neque nobis neque vobis irati sunt; neque nos neque vos miserati sunt. Quod invenerunt in Ecclesia tenuerunt; quod didicerunt docuerunt; quod a Patribus acceperunt hoc filiis tradiderunt. Nondum vobiscum apud istos iudices, aliquid agebamus et aquod eos acta est causa nostra, nec nos nec vos eis noti fueramus; et eorum pro nobis lata contra vos sententias recitamus. Nondum vobiscum certabamus, et eis pronunciantibus vicimus.*⁷¹

As for Seripando and the Catholics whom he represents, they would continue to bring, forward testimonies of the Fathers – not, of course, forged or falsely twisted testimonies, but genuine and faithfully cited documents – to refute the dogmas of the innovators and to vindicate the old, catholic doctrine.

2.1. St. Augustine

In his commentaries, Seripando seeks help from St. Augustine by preference. Augustine is, for Seripando, the "great Father."⁷² The blessed Father,⁷³ the Holy Father,⁷⁴ his own "Parent"⁷⁵ and the

⁷¹*Commentaria: Questio 6*: p. 368.

⁷²Cfr. *Commentaria*: Rom. 10, 14.

⁷³Cfr. *Commentaria*: Rom. 8, 3; 9, 14; 14, 23; 2 Cor. 3, 6.

⁷⁴Cfr. *Commentaria*: Rom. 8, 14.

⁷⁵Cfr. *Commentaria*: 2 Thess. 2, 1.

“bitter enemy of the heretics.”⁷⁶ In Seripando’s opinion, Augustine “follows Paul everywhere”;⁷⁷ his words “saviour of the highest wisdom and piety”;⁷⁸ he is an exegete in whom there appear all the requisites of an interpreter, in the highest degree;⁷⁹ he is, besides, the greatest theologian, after Paul, on the matter of predestination.⁸⁰ Augustine’s works are considered to be the “purest fountains” from which Seripando might freely draw;⁸¹ and this holy Doctor’s help is so necessary, in dealing with the words of Paul, that, without it Seripando would vainly labour in that line.⁸²

Augustine’s help is mostly sought by Seripando, in his speculations on St. Paul’s words that contain doctrines on original sin, concupiscence, faith, grace, justice and predestination. In his commentary on the Romans, which is a rich mine of these dogmas, Seripando refers to Augustine 72 times, whereas in those on the Corinthians and Thessalonians where these doctrines are not so frequently dealt with, the references are fewer in number (1 Cor.: 8 times; 2 Cor.: twice; 1 Thess.: once; 2 Thess.: twice.). One might wonder that in the commentary on the Galatians, Seripando refers to Augustine only once.⁸³ This fact is explained by the other fact that, in his commentary on the Galatians, Seripando sets apart the exposition of his theological reflections, and gives it in his “*Quaestiones*,” which abound in references to St. Augustine.

We can count 34 different works of Augustine to which Seripando has recourse in his commentaries. The most frequently quoted works are: “*De praedest. Sanctorum*”, “*De Praedest. et Gratia*”, “*De Dono Christi*”, “*De Gratia et Libero Arbitrio*”. “*De Bono Persev.*”; “*De Nat. et Gratia*”; “*De Corrept. et Gratia*”; “*Contra du Ep. Pelag.*” and “*De Civitate Dei*”. In some cases, Seripando is content with mere references; in others, with the gist

⁷⁶Cfr. *Commentaria*: Rom. 10, 9.

⁷⁷Cfr. *Commentaria*: Rom. 7, 7.

⁷⁸Cfr. *Commentaria*: Rom. 9, 14.

⁷⁹Cfr. *Commentaria*: Rom. and Gal. *Praeludium*.

⁸⁰*Commentaria*: pp. 142.

⁸¹*Commentaria*: Rom. 8, 33: p. 141.

⁸²*Commentaria*: *Quaestio* 64, p. 516.

⁸³*Commentaria*: p. 302 (Gal. 3, 12).

given in his own words while in the rest, he quotes Augustine’s own words, often, at length.

2.2. Other Fathers

Other Fathers too come to Seripando’s help, in his speculations on Paul’s words. St. Basil’s works are referred to thrice.⁸⁴ St. Gregory the Great helps him, while dealing with Rom. 7, 17.⁸⁵ St. Paulinus and Gregorius Theologus come in, while he reflects on Predestination, and on Rom. 11, 33 respectively.⁸⁶ Eusebius’ History is referred to in the commentary on 1 Thess. 2, 3.⁸⁷ It is strange that Seripando never brings in the authority of St. Chrysostom, in his commentaries. However, in his ‘*Quaestiones*’, Chrysostom’s authority is given much importance.

2.3. Cajetan and Aegidius Romanus

Among the more recent Doctors, Cajetan, “the most learned man of his times”⁸⁸ is Seripando’s favourite. As in word interpretation, so in sense interpretation too, Cajetan’s Commentaries on St. Paul have helped Seripando. However, Cajetan is quoted only once, namely in the excursus which Seripando makes, after Rom. Chapter 11, on predestination.⁸⁹

Aegidius Romanus too is quoted by Seripando. A portion of Aegidius’ ‘*De Agone Christi*’, is brought forward as an appendix to the commentary on the Romans,⁹⁰ which serves also as an introduction to the 51 moral axioms, picked out by Seripando, from the last four chapters of the Romans.⁹¹

⁸⁴Cfr. *Commentaria*: Rom. 14, 23, p. 241, also Ms. Nap. VII A 36, 2 Thess. C. III n. I.

⁸⁵*Commentaria*: p. 115.

⁸⁶Cfr. *Commentaria*: pp. 205 and 200.

⁸⁷Ms. Nap. LW 36, 1 Thess. 2, 3 (C. II n. II).

⁸⁸*Commentaria*: p. 202.

⁸⁹*Commentaria*: pp. 202-206.

⁹⁰*Commentaria*: p. 265.

⁹¹*Commentaria*: pp. 266-268.

2.4. Other Scholastics

The scholastics are, as a rule, subject to Seripando's censure, for their love of multiplying questions and problems, regarding the mysteries of faith which God Himself wanted to remain hidden.⁹² Who can count the knotty questions that have arisen, since the time when the mystery of divine election began to be discussed in the schools? The service these questions have rendered is to add more obscurity to human minds, rather than to bring greater light to them. As for Seripando, he would wish that at least the number of questions, did not exceed the number of the different schools.⁹³

2.5. Contemporary Theologians

Contemporary theologians too, are accused by Seripando, of a thirst for creating new opinions by subtle reasoning, on the pretext that, by such reasoning they could bring the heretics back. But these new opinions, in fact, differ from the doctrine of the Church and are "*a Patribus et verbo Dei abhorrentes.*"⁹⁴ Seripando would not even think of reading the books which contain such opinions, although their authors were, indeed, theologians whom he calls "*nominis et ordinis non infimi.*"⁹⁵ A new doctor who did not closely follow the foot-prints of the ancient Fathers, could not be appealing to Seripando. This is his open confession. Neither the new theories nor the searchers after them could be of use to cope with the times. Seripando expresses this idea in the words of his dear poet, Virgil. "*Non tali auxilio nec defensoribus istis, Tempus eget.*"⁹⁶

2.6. John Driedo

However, there was a theologian of his own time, who received from Seripando, the highest praise. He was John Driedo of Louvain: "*Summis in hac parte laudibus efferendum censeo, Joannem Diriedomum Lovaniensem qui et in hac et in aliis omnibus controversis, ita insectatur haereticos ut a Patrum doctrina quae una vere catholica censenda est ne transversum quidem discedat*

⁹²*Commentaria*: p. 162.

⁹³*Commentaria*: p. 162.

⁹⁴Cfr. *Commentaria*: p. 162.

⁹⁵*Commentaria*: p. 162 # 2.

⁹⁶Cfr. *Commentaria*: 162.

unquem et firmam inter eos concordiam siquid discrepare videatur, constituere studeat."⁹⁷

3. Personal Study and Research Work

Does Seripando want all modern exegetes and theologians to be mere 'catena' compilers? Does he want them to stifle all personal views, or bid farewell to all researches on scripture texts and theological questions?

We have to give a definitely negative answer to these questions. The unanimous opinion of the Fathers as well as the definitions of the Church, have, indeed, to be respected and closely adhered to; but this is not the case with the private opinion of a certain Father of however great learning or sanctity, or of passages of Scripture whose interpretations have not been declared by the authority of the Church. Seripando's stand on this point is made clear, in the passage where he deals with Cajetan's opinion on predestination. After having quoted Cajetan's opinion, Seripando adds:

Thus much Cajetan, wisely, of course, as he is wont, sharply, subtly, cautiously. However, if I should interpose my opinion, in this very difficult and very obscure question, let me not be considered either arrogant or wiser than it behoveth me to be wise. For, this as well as everything I have written, finally my whole self, I submit to the divine authority and judgment of the holy, Catholic Church. Besides, I entertain no pertinaciously fighting mood, towards anyone who is at least moderately versed in this Christian philosophy and thinks otherwise than I, provided he does not go astray from the rules of faith and from the decisions of the Fathers.⁹⁸

No wonder, if not even Augustine is spared by Seripando. The towering personality of Augustine cannot fail to impress anyone. His disciples admire him, and glory in him. Some, of them, blinded by the brilliance of this great Father's uncommon intelligence, have followed him, even in his exaggerations. We have the example of St. Fulgentius of Ruspe who is known as: "*Alter Augustinus*" and

⁹⁷Cfr. *Commentaria*: p. 163.

⁹⁸*Commentaria*: p. 203.

“*Augustinus abbreviatus*”. Augustine’s interpretation of “*Omne quod non est ex fide peccatum est*” (Rom. 14, 23) was copied by Fulgentius, exactly as it lay. Augustine understands “*fides*,” in this verse, in the sense of theological faith. Fulgentius proceeded further. He assumed this verse, as the foundation of his whole system of thought on human salvation, and arrived at conclusions which are inexcusably rigoristic.⁹⁹ Although the Council of Florence borrowed Fulgentius’ words for formulating its definition on the necessity of the Catholic Church for salvation, it has made some changes in the terminology, as if to give us a hint that, by assuming the terminology from Fulgentius, it does not mean to declare the approbation of his doctrine in all respects.¹⁰⁰ Seripando too was a great admirer of Augustine, as is clear from his own words quoted above. But he would not be blind to Augustine’s shortcomings. He too, like Fulgentius, is confronted with Augustine’s interpretation of Rom. 14, 23. He passes it over, as “*non propria ac germana*.”¹⁰¹ The same attitude is manifested by Seripando, in dealing with Augustine’s view on Rom. 9, 15.¹⁰²

In more than 15 instances, where the interpretation of the text is not certain, from the context, and where neither the judgment of the Church nor the authority of the Fathers comes in, to give an assurance, Seripando exposes the opinion he has formed, by his personal labour, on the text. He is scrupulous to point out his opinion as his own, by using phrases such as: ‘as far as I can reach by conjecture’,¹⁰³ ‘We are led by conjecture’,¹⁰⁴ ‘I understand’,¹⁰⁵ ‘my opinion is’,¹⁰⁶ ‘I should think’,¹⁰⁷ ‘Perhaps’,¹⁰⁸ ‘as far as my

⁹⁹Cfr. P. L. 65 coll. 552 AB.; 490c; 660 BCD; 646 AB.

¹⁰⁰Council of Florence, *Decretum pro Jacobitia*; D. B. 714, Fulgentius (De Fide ad Petrum n. 79: P. L. 65 col. 704 A.

¹⁰¹*Commentaria*: pp. 241 f.

¹⁰²*Commentaria*: p. 159.

¹⁰³Cfr. *Commentaria*: Rom. 1, 13; 7, 23.

¹⁰⁴Cfr. *Commentaria*: 1 Thess. 4, 11.

¹⁰⁵Cfr. *Commentaria*: Rom. 9, 9.

¹⁰⁶Cfr. *Commentaria*: Rom. 15, 19.

¹⁰⁷Cfr. *Commentaria*: Rom. 9, 26.

¹⁰⁸Cfr. *Commentaria*: Rom. 9, 32; 1 Cor. 15, 5.

knowledge goes’,¹⁰⁹ ‘It appears to be’.¹¹⁰ In ambiguous passages, Seripando exposes the possible explanations one after the other.¹¹¹

That mere opinions should, by no means, be represented as the one true sense, is Seripando’s rigorous rule. This he deduces from the example of Paul, who carefully avoids a clear-cut and decisive answer to the question about the food offered to idols, since, at that time, a decision had not yet been made on that point, by competent authority. Paul exhorts the Romans to abstain from any judgment on the matter: “*non licero ostendit ejus rei iudicium ullum facere quae occulta adhuc esset et nondum satis explicita, qualis haec tum erat, cum haec Paulus scriberet, an in Jesum Christum suscepta fide, cibis uti quos lex vetaret, permissum ac licitum esset*.”¹¹² At the end of the whole passage, Seripando draws this corollary: “*Haec vero Pauli doctrina doctissimos quosque viros continere debet, ne de re ulla controversa ac dissensionis plena, sententiam ferre audeant, priusquam de ea, Sancta, Catholica et Apostolica Ecclesia, stautat ac decidat*.”¹¹³

4. Parallel Passages of Scripture

A man of wide reading in scripture cannot read a certain passage, without, at the same time, seeing it illumined and illustrated by a number of other passages. That this was no less true in the case of Seripando is evident from his commentaries. For him the principal author of the whole Scripture is the spirit of truth: “*Sacrorum scil. Librorum, primus auctor, Spiritus Sanctus*.”¹¹⁴ This fact gives Seripando the certainty that one passage in Scripture, cannot be contradicted by another and that an obscure passage can be explained by a clearer passage of the same import, existing elsewhere.

This truth was admitted in principle, by the heretics of his time; but practically, it was rejected by them, in as much as they disowned these parts of the Bible which went counter to the creations of their

¹⁰⁹Cfr. *Commentaria*: Gal. 1, 17.

¹¹⁰Cfr. *Commentaria*: 1 Cor. 15, 5; Gal. 4, 27.

¹¹¹Cfr. *Commentaria*: 1 Thess. 4, 4; 3, 10.

¹¹²*Commentaria*: p. 230.

¹¹³*Commentaria*: p. 231 # 1.

¹¹⁴*Commentaria*: Gal. 3, 8; p. 300 # 2.

imaginations: “*Quanto deterius peccant isti, qui nunc Machabaeorum librum nunc Jacobi Epistolam, nunc Petri aut Joannis alteram, nunc eam quae ad Hebraeos est, nunc Joannis Apostoli Apocalypsim (ex quibus libris aperta contra eos oracula proferuntur) tamquam fictos et commentatitios contemunt.*”¹¹⁵

Seripando was determined to hold to this principle, in theory as well as in practice. When he reflected on some passage of Paul, many a passage from Paul himself and from other sacred authors, presented themselves to him, as throwing more light on the subject of his speculation. His principle of brevity in exposition forbade him to note down in the Commentary, all the passages that came to his mind.¹¹⁶ He wanted, besides, to avoid the practice of concordance making that had been dear to some of the scholastic exegetes. Seripando, generally, chooses some telling passages to clarify Paul’s mind on important matters.

In his commentary on the Romans, Seripando refers to 42 other books of the Bible, the most quoted among them being the Book of Psalms (46 times). Then follow, in descending order, Mathew (32 times), 1 Cor. (30 times), Isaiah (19 times), Gal. (15 times); Jeremiah, Genesis, 2 Cor. (10 times each), etc. In the Commentary on 1 Cor. references are made to 17 other books; the one most referred to, is St. John’s Gospel (8 times). The commentary on 2 Cor. contains references to 18 books out of which the 1 Cor. occur 26 times, the Romans, 13 times, the Acts 10 times. In the commentary on the Galatians, Seripando refers to 16 other books (46 times to the Rom. 16 times to the Acts, 15 times to Genesis etc.). In the commentary on I Thess., there are 76 references made to 18 different books, while in that on 2 Thess., we see 36 references to 14 books.

5. Classics, History, Philosophy, and Personal Observations from Nature and Social Life

Seripando’s speculation on Scripture passages is helped by the whole formation he had received from childhood. The classical authors whom he had studied, history, philosophy and personal observations from nature and social life, make it easy for him to understand the mind of Paul, in many instances.

¹¹⁵*Commentaria*: Questio Quarta: p. 358.

¹¹⁶*Commentaria*: p. 8.

Seripando’s ideas are twice crystallised into Virgil’s verses.¹¹⁷ Philosophers in general and Cicero in particular, endorse his speculations, on 1 Thess. 4, 18; 2 Thess. 3, 7 and Rom. 7, 7.¹¹⁸ His acquaintance with Menandor’s maxims enables him to divine the source from which Paul drew his wording in 1 Cor. 15, 38 (“*Corrumpunt bonos mores colloquia mala*”).¹¹⁹ Heraclitus’ works make him see how human philosophy can add obscurity to the simple and open philosophy of the Apostle.¹²⁰ Knowledge of sacred history, gives him the clue to Paul’s words about his μερίμνα πασῶν τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν (“*merimna pason ton ecclesion*”) (2 Cor. 11, 28),¹²¹ and to the diverse arguments brought in, one after another, in the first part of the Galatians.¹²² Profane history, for example, the story of Appollodorus, who, while being massacred by the Scythians, heard his own heart accusing itself, saying: “*Ego tibi horum causa sum,*” makes him catch Paul’s exact sense contained in the words: “*ad confirmanda corda vestra sine querela ... ante Deum Patrem nostrum in adventu Domini nostri Jesu Christi*” (1 Thess. 3, 13).¹²³

The observation of the effects produced by the direct rays of the blazing sun, on the naked eye, enables Seripando to understand the blindness caused in the Jews and Greeks (1 Cor. 1, 22) by the dazzling brightness of the greatest miracle of our Lord (the resurrection).¹²⁴ He had, many a time, observed, from his monastery in Pesillipo, ships tossing amidst the waves of the sea. That picture flashes across his mind, when he reflects over the struggles which Paul and the Thessalonians had, constantly, to confront with.¹²⁵ The ordinary tricks of wine-sellers, give him an analogy with the tricks of

¹¹⁷*Commentaria*: Rom. 9, 19; 9, 27.

¹¹⁸*Commentaria*: p. 108.

¹¹⁹Ms. Nap. VII A 36: 1 Cor. 15, 33 (C. XV n. X).

¹²⁰*Commentaria*: p. 193.

¹²¹Cfr. also *Commentaria*: p. 272.

¹²²*Commentaria*: pp. 278 # 2, 284-291.

¹²³Ms. Nap. VII A 36; 1 Thess. 3, 13 (c. III n. V).

¹²⁴Ms. Nap. VII A 36; 1 Cor. C. 1 n. XI (1 Cor. 1, 22).

¹²⁵Ms. Nap. VII A 36; 2 Thess. C. I n. III (2 Thess. 1, 6).

the false prophets to adulterate the doctrine of Christ (2 Cor. 2, 17).¹²⁶

The offering of beautiful gifts, in dirty plates, the overflowing of fountains, the wonderful clemency that kings, sometimes, show to culprits who commit crimes again and over again, and yet heartily repent, the effect of rain in a dry ground that thirsts for water, nuptial garments, the extreme care exhibited by diligent nurses towards infants, the strong gates of a garden, the bad eggs laid by bad crows, the affection of a father who leads his child by the hand, and the action of the goldsmith who proves gold in the furnace, help Seripando, in his speculations on St. Paul's expressions, in Rom. 1, 8; 3, 2; 3, 22a; 3, 22b; 6, 5; 11, 33; 2 Thess. 2, 8; 2, 16 f and 2 Cor. 13, 6, respectively.¹²⁷

6. Conclusion

To sum up, Seripando, in his deeper speculations on the words of Paul, closely adheres to the guidance offered by the authority of the Church and the unanimous voice of the Fathers and the light from other passages of scripture. He freely accepts the helps rendered by classical authors, history, philosophy, natural science and social life, and expresses his opinions as his own, leaving the final judgment on them to the authority of the Catholic church which is the "*columna et firmamentum veritatis*."¹²⁸ Thus, in every part of his exegetical works, Seripando could be sure that he was not playing with his imagination, but discovering the real mind of Paul, under the guidance of reliable authorities.

The leader of the Reformation had done just the contrary. As early as 1519, Luther made a solemn declaration, in his preface to the Commentary on the Galatians, which logically led him to the thesis that individual judgment was the supreme authority, in scripture-interpretation. Here are his own words:

Porro, optimi viri, ut vobis serio dicam, ego Romano Pontifici ejusque decretis eum honorem habeo, quo nullus est superior, nec excipio nisi principem hujus

¹²⁶Ms. Nap. VII A 36; 2 Cor. C. II n. VI (2 Cor. 2, 17).

¹²⁷Rom. 1, 8 (*Com.* p. 28 # 1), 3, 2 (*Com.* p. 47); 3, 4 (*Com.* p. 48); 3, 22 (*Com.* p. 56); 6, 5 (*Com.* p. 92); 11, 33 (*Com.* p. 200); 2 Thess. 2, 8 (Ms. Nap. VII A 36 C. II n. III); 2, 15 f. 2 Cor. 13, 6 (Ms. Nap. VII A 36 C. XIII, n III).

¹²⁸1 Tim. 3, 15; cfr. Q. 4 *Com.* p. 361.

*Vicarii, Jesum Christum, dominum nostrum et omnium. Hujus verbum ita praefero vicarii verbis, ut nihil dubitem secundum ipsum judicare de omnibus et dictis et factis Vicarii. Volo enim subjectum eum esse huic irrefragabilbi regulae Apostoli: 'Omnia provate, quod bonum est tenete'. Ab hoc, inquam, jugo neminem patiar collum excutere sive nomine matris sive Magistrae ecclesiarum vehatur, atque ideo magis quo nostro saeculo vidimus concilia reprobari, rursus alia confirmari, Theologiam meris opinionibus tractari, jurium sensum ab unius hominis pendere arbitrio et adeo confundi omnia, ut nihil certi pene nobis relictum sit.*¹²⁹

The great perplexity that followed from the declaration of private judgment as the final authority in scripture-interpretation was a terrible one, as owned by Protestants themselves. "No doubt" says F. W. Farrar, "The Reformers were instantly liable to be perplexed by the fact that the exercise of the individual judgment led men into the extremist diversities. In the Sacramentarian controversies, Calvin and Campanus and Enser and Servetus and Socimus appealed equally to scripture and claimed the right to interpret it in their own way."¹³⁰

They tried to solve the problem. Melancton proposed: "Consensus of pious men." As the final authority Calvin preferred the authority to be placed in the "*verorum, episocporum synodus*."¹³¹ Others proposed still other solutions; but till today, that authority has not been, acknowledged, by Protestants, as existing in the Catholic church and exclusively in it, as has been shown by Seripando. Are they hesitating to acknowledge it because they still believe in the assertion of Luther, quoted above, that the Pope and the Councils have erred in interpreting scripture? If it is so, we invite them to make an impartial study of the decrees of the Popes and the Councils from the very beginning up to this day. In the Church, there existed abuses and they did try for a reform. Seripando was one of those

¹²⁹LW 2/ pp. 446, 38 – 447, 9.

¹³⁰F. W. Farrar: "The Reformers as Expositors II, Luther". In *Expositor* (London) second series vol. VII (1885) p. 222.

¹³¹F. W. Farrar: "The Reformers as Expositors II, Luther". In *Expositor* (London) second series vol. VII (1885) p. 222.

who earnestly, worked for removing all the abuses from the Church. This Seripando, who fought for Church reform within and without the Council of Trent, even to the extent of incurring the great displeasure of the Pope who had created him Cardinal, Seripando, who had no fears, at all, to point out the defects of the scholastic system and to censure the exaggerated philosophization of the schoolmen, using expressions that were not less strong than those used by Luther himself, Seripando who as the formulation of the decrees on justification, made the council of Trent study the question in prolonged sessions and feel that the protestants were not, after all, as great sinners as the majority had thought them to be, Seripando, who as member of the Committee for dealing with the abuses in scripture interpretation, fought with might and main to encourage the use of Scripture in the original languages – this sincere man of undaunted courage, could not find the least defect in the exercise of the Church’s power in interpreting the words of Holy Writ, even after having counted, weighed and sifted all the accusations made by Protestants against the Church, in this respect. He, who, in all sincerity, sought to give the Protestants all possible concessions, could not find any point that could be yielded in this matter. Hence he sticks to and vindicates the old norms of private speculation, on Scripture texts viz. the authority of the Church, of the Fathers and of parallel texts, showing, at the same time, that these rules do not demand any intellectual slavery, but provide the intellect with the means to proceed with its researches, with security.

CHAPTER 3

EXPOSITION

The heretics compose voluminous commentaries, says Seripando, but they contain very little of what pertains to the explanation of the sacred authors. They wish to appear to have laboured much, for clarifying the obscure passages of scripture. But what they do, after having hastily given something by way of introduction, is to indulge in digressions in which they expose their own doctrine and corroborate their pestilential teaching, under the pretext of digging out truth from the depths of darkness. Thus they confuse and cover up the contents of Holy Scripture, “by the straw of their verbosity.” What they do with the sacred literature makes one remember what the greatest guardian of truth, Our Lord Jesus Christ, said about holy things thrown to dogs and about pearls strewn before pigs.¹³²

There are yet other fields, wherein they wander about, even longer; for they seek to throw calumnies and contumelies at the Catholic Church, vex her doctrine and her morals, sparing no one at all, of whatsoever learning or sanctity. Fathers and Councils, Doctors and saints are objects of their ridicule.¹³³

In all this, the heretics are led by the longing to persuade others that they alone know things as they are, and that all the others are but shadows that roam about. They even boast of some passages which they have treacherously picked out from the books of the Catholics and twisted to their own purposes. Sometimes, they attribute to Catholics, things which never entered the minds of the latter.¹³⁴

Seripando wanted to avoid all these defects, in his own commentaries. He tells Cervini that, in his commentaries, he has tried to explain the mind of Paul, in as few and as clear words as possible.¹³⁵ Brevity and clarity are his watchwords. Ornamental language he thinks to be out of place and even puerile, in treating of

¹³² *Commentaria: Praefatio*, pp. 5 f.

¹³³ *Commentaria: Praefatio*, p. 6.

¹³⁴ *Commentaria: Praefatio*, p. 7.

¹³⁵ *Commentaria: Praefatio*, p. 8.

a subject, whose sublime character does not allow us to think of ornamental style or beautiful flourishes of the literary art.¹³⁶

1. Brevity

The proposal to be brief, is put into practice by Seripando, in the explanation of the very first word of the Epistle to the Romans: “*Paulus: de quo nomine, praeter ea quae dicta sunt ab his qui hactenus scripsere, nihil mihi dicendum sese obtulit.*”¹³⁷ We would vainly seek long “catenae” from the Fathers or exhaustive concordances to scripture passages, in Seripando’s explanations. He depends mainly on Augustine, from whom he culls out some passages and adduces them in his commentaries on the Romans. In the commentaries on the other Epistles, he contents himself with mere references to Augustine’s works, sometimes of course, with the gist given in his own brief sentences. The only exception is, his commentary on 2 Thess. 2, 1, where he gives a fairly long passage from Augustine’s, “*de Civitate Dei.*”

Out of the 382 references he makes to scripture passages, in his commentary on the Romans, 164 are mere references, allusions or adaptations, and only the remaining 218 are full quotations. In the Galatians, he refers to other passages 134 times, out of which, only 67 are full quotations. The references he makes in the 4 unpublished commentaries can be divided into three categories: mere references (allusions or adaptations), half quotations and full quotations. They can be tabulated as follows:

Commentary	References	Half Quotations	Full Quotations	Total
1 Cor.	39	15	9	= 63
2 Cor.	41	19	29	= 89
1 Thess.	31	20	28	= 79
2 Thess.	19	7	11	= 37

Besides avoiding ‘catenae’ and elaborate concordances, Seripando takes care to abstain from long digressions. He says in the preface that he purposely avoided long digressions from the main theme, as harmful to the scope of the Epistle.¹³⁸ He does not, however, deny

¹³⁶*Commentaria: Praefatio*, p. 8.

¹³⁷*Commentaria*: p. 17.

¹³⁸*Commentaria: Praefatio*, p. 9.

the usefulness or, sometimes, even the necessity of some digressions. Some digressions are necessary to explain the sense of difficult words and phrases or to clarify the mind of Paul, regarding some complicated ideas. Seripando admits this necessity and he himself employs such digressions; but he always insists that they should be as brief as possible and remains faithful to his words, in the exposition of his own commentaries. Some digressions, although not strictly necessary, are useful, in order to meet the arguments brought by the heretics against the real doctrine handed down by the Apostle. These digressions, Seripando prefers to avoid, in the Commentary proper, as we have seen above, and proposes to make up for them, by a special treatise apart from the Commentary.¹³⁹ This is, in fact, what Seripando does, in the case of the Epistle to the Galatians.

In his exposition, Seripando does not seek occasions for self-glorification or for the humiliation, of his adversaries. He gives his own opinions and his judgments on the opinions of others, in some instances; but he does so, with modesty and with due respect for those whom he judges. In a few instances where he speaks about heretics in the commentaries, Seripando’s language would seem a bit harsh.¹⁴⁰ If we make allowance for the literature of the sixteenth century, this apparent harshness will be seen not to cross the limits of a healthy seriousness.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹*Commentaria: Praefatio*, p. 9.

¹⁴⁰Speaking of the heretics of his time, Seripando says, in his Commentary on 2 Thess. 2, 8: “*Deum enim, omnia Christiane vitae et institutionis decreta in dubium revocant, tanquam mali corvi mala ova novos nobis Arnovos Anabaptistas.*” (Ms. Nap. VII A 36, 2 Thess. 2, 8; C. II n. III).

¹⁴¹Erich Roth, in an art. on “Martin Luther and the Continental Reformation II” attenuates the rough language used by Luther against his adversaries: “It is not possible for us”, he says, “to appreciate Luther’s sometimes rough language unless we are students of literature of the sixteenth century e.g. when Luther said of his esteemed Sovereign the Elector Frederick, at the Aulic table, during banquet: “He works like an ass,” he meant it as high praise. And above all, his books were written on the spur of the moment and went to the printers without being re-read or polished.” *Church Quarterly Review*, Jan. – March 1952, p. 23 # 3.

2. Clarity

Seripando's language is clear and flowing. It avoids the rigid terminologies of the scholastics on the one hand, and the exaggerated flourishes of the humanists, on the other. He does follow the analytical method, distinguishing aspect from aspect, argument from argument, but he never drives his divisions into the hair-split distinctions of the scholastics, that may quickly tire out the ordinary reader. Seripando's divisions are easy to catch; and are generally conducive to the better understanding of the passages he handles.¹⁴²

Since Seripando's primary care is to be clear, he uses, in some cases, terms borrowed from the Greek literature, which are supposed to be well-known to his readers.¹⁴³ That such a clear presentation was not made without much-labour, is evident from the manuscripts on his commentaries on the Corinthians and Thessalonians. They contain corrections as regards the selection of words, the construction of sentences and the position of words in the sentence.¹⁴⁴

Diversity of expression which removes monotony and adds interest, is Seripando's special care, as regards the exposition of the sense,¹⁴⁵ but as regards the translation of the sacred text, Seripando

¹⁴²Cfr. *Commentaria*: Gal. P. 284; Rom. P. 177 etc. 2 Cor. 1, 15.

¹⁴³Cfr. *Commentaria*: Rom. Pp. 177, 191, 203 etc.

¹⁴⁴E.g. cfr. *Commentaria*: 1 Thess. 5, 5: "Omnes enim vos etc. *Ratio vero quare in tenebris non estis illa est quia in nobis divinae lucis sive notionis impressa est effigies*". Seripando had first written: "*divinae lucis sive gratiae*"; afterwards, he struck off the word: "*gratiae*" and supplied the word "*notionis*" in the margin. Cfr. also 1 Thess. 4, 5, where the word "notitia" is considered to be less apt, and the word "*institutio*" is suggested in its place, in the margin. In 1 Thess. 4, 4: "*progredi*" is put in the margin as equivalent to, or even more apt than "*proficere*," which Seripando had used in the body: cfr. 2 Thess. 3, 6 ("*correptio*" + "*medicina*"). In 1 Cor. 4, 18: "*Virtus*" is thought to be less apt than "*potentia*" which is, therefore, suggested in the margin. The construction which "*attingit*" in 1 Thess. 4, 10 is considered to be less exact, and so Seripando puts just above that word, the phrase: "*attignere debet*." In many cases, to procure the flow of words in the sentence, Seripando, proposes to change their order, e.g. 2 Cor. 3, 8: "*ea omnia separatism cum Thessalonicae ent coram declaraverat*". Cfr. also 2 Cor. 3, 8; 2 Thess. 2, 5.

¹⁴⁵E.g. When Seripando has to express the word "say", twice consecutively, he uses two different words. "De hoc itaque *inquit*": "*Sepulcrum patens est guttur eorum*." *De lingua deinde* ait: "*Linguis suis dolose agebant*" (Rom. 3, 13 f); cfr. also Rom. 2, 15.

prefers to use, as far as possible, the same Latin expression for the same Greek word.¹⁴⁶ "It is puerile," he had said, in the preface, "to seek commentary style" in matters which are, in themselves, sublime.

3. The Resultant Volumes

The principles of brevity and clarity have influenced Seripando, all through his exegetical works. The consequence is that his commentaries are comparatively short and that his vocabulary is ordinary and familiar. In his exegetical works, we can distinguish three different categories:

1. The interlinear Glossa
2. The paraphrase
3. The Commentary proper

3.1. The Glossa

The interlinear-Glossa (codex 378 of the Trivulzian Library, Milan) consists of 57 folios in 8. It renders the Greek text into Latin, giving, within brackets, the information necessary for a clear perception of the flow of words and ideas.

3.2. The Paraphrase

The paraphrases of the Epistles to the Corinthians and Thessalonians assume a more expansive form. In them, Seripando attends more to the exposition of the thought of the Apostle. He amplifies the brief statements of the Apostle, by adding the definitions of difficult terms, indicating causes and reasons and illustrating the text, by references to parallel passages.¹⁴⁷

Although, in his paraphrases, Seripando does, as a rule, give the literal translation of the text also, he is not always steady in that respect.¹⁴⁸ He himself uses the Greek text; and supposes that the

¹⁴⁶E.g. The Greek word, *logisethao* is constantly rendered by "*imputari*," whereas the Vg. renders it by "*reputari*" (Rom. 4, 3), by "*accepto ferri*" (Rom. 4, 5).

¹⁴⁷Cfr. e.g. Ms. Nap. VII A 36: on 2 Thess. 2, 3b and on 1 Cor. 15, 52.

¹⁴⁸V.g. Seripando begins the exegesis of 1 Cor., like this: "*In omni loco ipsorum et nostrae: Scribit ad Ecclesiam Corinthiorum quam et describit dicens "sanctificatis" scribit et ad omnes cultores nominis Jesu... In omni verbo et omni scientia; Hae sunt Christianorum divitiae in quibus gloriari possunt, in quibus comprehenduntur fides verbi et cognitio Dei, Jer. 19. Non gloriatur etc.*"

reader has, by his side, the text in the original Greek, and that he follows it, closely, as he goes through the paraphrase. Seripando gives, first of all, the Latin version of two or three initial words of the passage, and then begins to explain the passage in his own words, in such a way that the reader perceives the sequence of the following words and ideas from the preceding ones.

Whenever Seripando gives the words of the Apostle, as they are, he gives them some prominence. In the 1 Cor., he puts the Apostle's words, in more erect characters; however, this care is not, often, perceptible. In the 2 Cor. and the Thessalonians, he underlines the Apostle's words. The initial words of a passage, which come at the beginning of the paragraph, are, by that very fact, more prominent than the explanation which follows, for they are kept at the top, in a separate line, as the title of the paragraph.

The reader can perceive a gradual progress in the mode of exposition, as he proceeds from the 1 Cor. and passes on in order, to the 2 Cor., the 1 Thess. and to the 2 Thessalonians. The First and Second Cor. go almost in the same tone; from the 1 Thess. the progress becomes marked. Seripando is no more a beginner, in the art of Exegesis. The very introductory words of these Epistles are explained in such away as to give the reader an insight into the whole epistle. The salutation of the 1 Thess. is compared with the salutations of the other Epistles of Paul. His explanation of the passage on Antichrist (2 Thess. 2, 7) shows his ability to tackle difficult passages.

Seripando's language too manifests a gradual progress, as it proceeds from the 1 Cor. to the 2 Thessalonians. In the first Corinthians, he seems to have intended to be more matter of fact, while, as he reaches the 1 Thessalonians, his care to be pleasing to his readers, becomes, more manifest.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹Compare the passage given at the beginning of the Commentary on 1 Cor. With the passage with which Seripando begins the Commentary on 1 Thess.: "*Paulus et Silvanus etc. Quos habuerat Paulus, dum Evangelium Christi Thessalonicae praedicaret, colleges, eosdem, et in his duabus scribendis Epistolis sibi adjunxit, Silvanum et Timotheum. Neque vero se vel Apostolum nuncupat, vel alicujus dignitatis praerogativa commendat quemadmodum in omnibus aliis Epistolis, quibus nomen scripsit suum, consueverat. Nam existimationem apud istos auctoritatem et fidem conciliare sibi non oportebat qui scilicet a falsis Apostolis decepti non fuerant sicut*

As said above, these paraphrases are comparatively brief. The paraphrases on 1 Cor. is contained in 50 folios of 205x75 mm.; 2 Cor. takes 44 folios of more or less the same size; 1 Thess. and 2 Thess. take 13 and 8 folios of almost the same size, respectively.

3.3. The Commentaries

The Commentaries proper are those on the Romans and Galatians. In them, Seripando's care is all-sided. The version of the original text is carefully given, as we have indicated above, in bold capital letters. The explanations too consider all aspects, as the word 'all', in this matter, could have meant, in Seripando's time. For, if we judge Seripando's exegesis with the criteria of today, it will be seen to be wanting in aspects such as the examination of the text in the light of Archaeology and of the history of words. The passages from Scripture and the Fathers are quoted fully, in places where they are needed. Theological speculations are given greater prominence, without, at the same time, leading them into excessive length, or dragging them into discussions with heretics.

Comparing the Commentary of Seripando on the Romans with that on the Galatians, one may note that the latter is rather too sketchy. Seripando seems to have done so, purposely, in order to avoid repetitions. For, the theological reflections on the texts on the Galatians had to be exposed, at length, in his "*Quaestiones*" on the Galatians, which immediately followed.

The Ms. copy of the commentary on the Romans (Nap.VII A.20) comprises 252 folios of 225x165 mm. The Ms. of the commentary on the Galatians, takes 69 and that of the '*Quaestiones*' 196 folios of the same size (i.e. 225x165 mm). Concise and clear, flowing, charming and orderly, Seripando's exposition of Paul's mind, offers a pleasing study to the highly instructed as well as to the ordinary intellect.

4. Conclusion

Seripando was a student of the reform movement of the sixteenth century. He had understood its implications. He was, towards the end of his life, the intellectual leader of the party that cried for a complete reform within the Church. He ardently desired a reform in the field of Scripture interpretation too. For this purposes,

Romani, Corinthii, Galatae, Colosenses ad quos cum scribit se verum Jesu Christi servum et Apostolum falsis et mendacibus veterationibus opponit..."

he had studied the question well. As he assures Cervini, in his dedicatory letter, Seripando had studied all the works of the heretics published up to that time.¹⁵⁰ He had observed the defects on both sides.

While, therefore, Seripando complained against the abuse among the protestants who went in search of the original text, in order to find out a support to their new tenets, and often brought out passages which “*neque cum Hebracis neque cum Graecis, neque cum Latinis consentient*,” he bewailed also the apparently little encouragement that was given by the Council of Trent to the study of Scripture, in the original languages, in spite of his continued labours for it, as a member of the committee for preparing the decrees, regarding scripture interpretation. While he detected in the exegetical works of heretics, their cunning devices to gain the benevolence of their readers, by depicting themselves as the only faithful followers of Christ and by extolling themselves, even to the level of Paul and the prophets, so as to give their doctrine a dominating authority, he accused the scholastics of an exaggerated search for the minutise and of a mania for multiplying questions and problems which God himself wanted to remain unrevealed. We know how Seripando wished that the opinions of the schools remained in the class-rooms, and did not enter into the discussions of the Council.

Having fought for his views in the Council and found his dreams of reform in the line of Scripture interpretation, almost vanishing in the air, Seripando left his ideas solidified in the exegetical works which he had written, under the instigation of Cardinal Cervini, and wherein, he follows the time-honoured rules, interpreted in the right way.

Seripando acknowledged the necessity of an upright, undisturbed and serene spirit, in an exegete, and proposed to maintain it himself, all through his works. He searched out and exposed the mind of Paul, under the guidance of the unimpeachable norms of perpetual flow and stability, of submission to the God-given authority of the Church and to the competent judgement of the Fathers, of Biblical inerrancy and of the subservience of natural reason, sciences and history, to the better understanding of the Creator’s own words. For Seripando, these norms do not imply

¹⁵⁰Cfr. *Commentaria*: pp. 2 f.

intellectual servitude, but they afford competent help, in a matter in which the individual intellect would be subject to illusions and confusions, if left to itself.

It is important to note how Seripando understood the norm of submission to the judgment of the Church and of the Fathers. The man who tenaciously adhered to the authority of the Church, and who even refused to read theological treatises written by famous Catholic theologians, for the fact that they did not follow the foot-prints of the Fathers, did not think himself bound to follow blindly the opinion of any Father, be he the great St. Augustine whom he almost adored. Seripando did not find the authority of the Church, standing in the way of the study of the Bible, in the original languages or of the critical restoration of it, into original purity. He did not find himself forbidden by Church authority to study the scripture text, in such a way, as to see how much of the Church’s doctrine was in fact, explicitly handed down by the sacred author, and how much of it was but implicitly contained in Scripture. And all this, at a time when the Protestants, and even some of the Catholics were thinking that the Church was keeping human intellect under restraint and that she was closing up all the prospects for individual study and researches on, the sacred text!

It is no wonder, if, when one goes on reading Seripando’s exegetical works, one mutters, almost on consciously, some word of congratulation to Seripando, on his having succeeded to carry out his determination to use “*verba quam usitatissima et maxia apta*,” which he, in his modesty, feared whether, in fact, he had found out, and on his having achieved the end of his special labours (viz., to accommodate his words to the prejudiced minds of the heretics), by avoiding the scholastic terminologies which were disliked by the heretics, even to the extent of hatred, by prudently avoiding frequent references to church authority, which could have appealed but little, to his erring brethren, by adhering to Augustine, by preference, the one Father who did still command the respect and confidence of Protestants, by avoiding, carefully, overstatements and understatements, regarding the mind of Paul, on points of dogma, and finally, by abstaining from digressions, against his adversaries, which, otherwise, was the order of the day, in that epoch.

It remains for us, to see in detail, how Seripando behaved with heretics, when he actually exposed and defended Pauline theology, on points which were the objects of heated discussion, at that time. We will take up that study in the pages that follow.