

## PART II

### SERIPANDO THE BIBLICAL THEOLOGIAN

Two main reasons urged Seripando to have recourse to the Bible, for the solution of the theological problem of the day: the exaggerated indulgence of the Scholastics in dialectics and the audacious arbitrariness of the Reformers, in dealing with Bible texts.

From the forgoing pages, we already know what impression the scholastic dialectics had created in Seripando. Here, it is enough to recall his remark in the order of the day for the council of Trent which he had drawn up in January 1546. "*Expectant animae Christi Jesu sanguine redemptae, spinosis et inutilibus quaestionibus amputatis, verborum inanibus pugnis rejectis, profanis vocum novitatibus explosis, liquidam, placatam, priscam scientiam salutis, ut facilis apud omnes et expedita sit omnium quae ad salutem pertinent intelligentia.*"<sup>1</sup>

We have also seen enough of the Protestant arbitrariness, in dealing with scripture texts. Boasting of their pretended fidelity to the Gospel of St. Paul, the reformers were gaining the sympathy of the ignorant and ill-instructed, for the new doctrine preached under the veil of the apostle's words. The diffusion of their ideas was chiefly done, through their commentaries on Scripture.<sup>2</sup> Among the Catholics, there were, indeed, great men like John Driedo and John Cochlaeus who had ably disclosed the fallacies contained in the doctrine of the reformers.<sup>3</sup>

However, there was a great desideratum on the part of the Catholics, even as late as the year 1551, as we gather from the words of Ambrosius Catharinus, Seripando's contemporary: "*Quia haeretici in commentariis suis ad Scripturas et praesertim ad Paulum, suis illos disseminarunt errores, iccirec hoc a plerisque desiderabatur ut et nostri queque haberent in Commentariis, quo et ipsa Scriptura responderetur illis et confutarentur dum verior Apostoli sensus commodius declaratur.*"<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>C.T. II 419, 17 ff.

<sup>2</sup>*Commentaria R. P. F. Ambrosii Catharini Politi Senensis Episcopi Minoriensis in Omnes Divi Pauli et alios Septem Canonicas Epistolas. Venetiis 1551, p. 2.*

<sup>3</sup>Seripando: *Commentaria*, p. 163; A. Catharinus, p.2.

<sup>4</sup>A. Catharinus, p. 2.

Catharinus, in fact wrote a commentary of this sort, in order to satisfy this desideratum. Although Seripando was convinced of the great need of the day, like Catharinus, he could not accept Catharinus' work, as an ideal. According to Seripando, the mingling up of polemics with exegesis was a stumbling block to an exegete. He would rather use the exegesis proper to disclose the '*verior Apostoli sensus*', as Catharinus puts it, and write another work distinct from the exegesis, so that: "*ipsa Scriptura responderetur illis (erroribus haereticorum) et confutarentur (haeretici).*" Seripando's own words put the idea in a clearer form. "However," he writes in the Preface, "lest by holding discussions, I should interrupt the duty of interpretation and cast obscurity over the light of the divine words, the whole of that business, I shifted to the end of the Commentary, on the Epistle to the Galatians."<sup>5</sup> He alludes to his '*Quaestiones*' wherein he exposes the errors of the Reformers and refutes them, by evidence brought from Bible texts.

Seripando willingly accepted the term: 'Gospel of St. Paul', used by the heretics themselves, to signify the doctrine or theology preached by the Apostle.<sup>6</sup> Some of the recent theologians, like Bonairven seem to follow Seripando, in preferring this simpler and more Biblical term to the other one, which is more frequently used today, the theology of St. Paul.<sup>7</sup>

It is to vindicate the genuine Gospel of St. Paul against the one preached, under that title, by the heretics of his day, that Seripando undertook the work of the *Quaestiones*. "*Nos autem,*" says Seripando in *Quaestio 2* "*ut Paulum sub cujus ementita persona, seipsos fallacissime venditant, ab eorum calliditate et calumniis vendicemus, hunc scribendi laboram suscepimus.*"<sup>8</sup>

The two fold end Seripando had proposed to himself, was therefore to lay bare the devices employed by the heretics in order to present their new doctrine under the name: 'Gospel of St. Paul', and to expose and defend the Pauline gospel, in its genuine form.

In the two following sections, we will study Seripando's commentaries and '*Quaestiones*' under these two aspects.

<sup>5</sup>Seripando: *Commentaria*, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup>Seripando: *Quaestiones*, 5, 7, 11.

<sup>7</sup>Joseph Bonsirven: *L'Evangile de Paul*, Paris, 1948, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup>Seripando: *Commentaria*: Q. 2, p. 350.

## SECTION I

### DEVICES OF THE HERETICS

The “*Quaestiones*” were well planned by Seripando, to serve his purpose of exposing the fallacies contained in the arguments of the heretics. The first part of each ‘*Quaestio*’ states concisely the argument of the heretics, on a certain point. This statement is made in Seripando’s own words, for the sake of brevity, clarity and simplicity.

*Quod autem non eorum quoque verba reposuerim, illud in causa fuit, quod non ab uno dumtaxat sed a pluribus et libris et auctoribus unum in locum collectae et comportatae sint. Eas praeterea, ipsi verborum multitudine obruunt et oratio more, aperta quasi manu dilatant et ornant ad occultandas fallacias et sophisticas ineptias.*<sup>9</sup>

The second part is devoted to the refutation. First of all, Seripando admits all that can be admitted, in the argument of the heretics, and then he deals with the part that is objectionable. With the precision of an experienced exegete, he points out the exact spot where the error is let to creep in.

The “*Quaestiones*,” sixty seven in all, are proposed in connection with the important texts of the Epistle to the Galatians, proceeding in order, from the first chapter to the last. A study of the “*Quaestiones*” takes us to the fundamental error of the heretics and to the various devices they were constrained to employ in order to maintain it.

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<sup>9</sup>*Seripando: Commentaria: Preface, p. 10.*

## CHAPTER 1

### FUNDAMENTAL ERROR

The greatest crime of the Reformers was that they mutilated the Gospel of Paul. *Quaestiones* 2, 3, 5, 7, 11 and 60 show how the heretics had narrowed down the contents of Pauline teaching. According to them any doctrine that demanded anything more than mere faith, for the justification of the sinner, was in open conflict with Paul’s theology.<sup>10</sup> The preaching of the law of Charity or of the need of good works, or acts of the divine cult and devotion was likewise considered by them, as foreign to the mind of the Apostle.<sup>11</sup> This mentality, according to Seripando, closed up within a little, narrow space, the holy and extensive field of the Gospel.<sup>12</sup>

How could they imagine that the preaching of the gospel was restricted to faith alone? Could they pass over unnoticed all that our Lord Jesus Christ taught by His word and example? Was it faith alone that Christ commanded the Apostles, to preach through the length and breadth of the world? All the things that the four Evangelists wrote can hardly be summed up in faith alone. If one considers these things, one will be convinced that the Gospel speaks of many other things besides faith. Namely of hope, of charity, of the precepts, of the promise of the eternal life which is not contained in the Law, of good works and of persecutions suffered with patience for the name of Christ and of the abundant reward set apart in heaven, for those who suffer such persecutions.<sup>13</sup>

We can admit that St. Paul’s Gospel consisted in the preaching that the grace of Christ to which we are led gratuitously, without any dependence on the works of the Law, is enough and abundant for the attainment of salvation. But the grace of Christ, according to St. Paul, signifies not only faith, as the heretics would have it. But all the gifts that He confers on mankind.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Cfr. *Seripando: Commentaria: Q. 5, 7, 11.*

<sup>11</sup>Cfr. *Seripando: Commentaria: Q. 11, 41, 60.*

<sup>12</sup>Cfr. *Seripando: Commentaria: Q. 60, p. 501.*

<sup>13</sup>Cfr. *Seripando: Commentaria: Q. 60, p. 501.*

<sup>14</sup>Cfr. *Seripando: Commentaria: Q. 5, p. 363.*

But this mania for mutilation was almost an instinct that the Reformers seem to have inherited from their leader. The Gospel in its entirety, as taught and handed down, from the beginning of the church, till the sixteenth century, could not give peace to Luther's conscience. He sought a way out of the hard part of the gospel. He got the key to the outlet, from a suggestion of his superior Staupits. Here is Luther's own exposition of the fact, which we quote from his letter to Staupits:

*Memini, Reverende Pater, inter jucundissimas et salutares fabulas tuas, quibus me solet Dominus Jesus mirifice consolari, incidisse aliquando mentionem hujus nominis, "poenitentiae," ubi miserti conscientiarum multarum carnificumque illorum, qui praeceptis infinitis eisdemque importabilibus modum docent (ut vocant) confitendi, te velut e coelo sonantem excipimus quod poenitentia vera non est, nisi quae ab amore justitiae et Dei incipit, et hoc esse potius principium poenitentiae quod illis finis et consummatio censetur ... quae omnia Paulinae Theologiae ita respondent apte, ut nihil ferme aptius Paulum illustrare possit, meo saltem iudicio.*<sup>15</sup>

The 'sola fide' theory was but a further step in this effort to shake off the harder part of Pauline Theology, which Luther had, indeed, taken when he presided over the discussions on infused and acquired faith, in 1520.<sup>16</sup>

Having shown that it was the 'sola fide' preachers and not the Catholic Church, which always accepted the Gospel of Paul in all its amplitude, that had overthrown the Gospel, Seripando addresses the Reformers in the following words: "You, you, therefore, are the over-throwers of the gospel of peace, you, who decide that man's salvation is to be attributed to faith alone, whereas the Gospel attributes it to faith with works and to works that spring from the roots of faith."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup>L. W. 1/ p. 525, 5-14, 29-30. The letter was written in 1518.

<sup>16</sup>L. W. 6/ 94, 7-9.

<sup>17</sup>Seripando: *Commentaria*: Q. 2, p. 352.

## CHAPTER 2

### DEVICES THAT SUSTAINED THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR

The 'sola fide' Gospel revolutionized the whole Protestant outlook on the Bible. The heretics tried to read their ideas into the words of Paul, in spite of the serious discrepancies that confronted them. In the struggle to safeguard their view, they were forced, in many cases, to neglect some of the fundamental rules of interpretation, in others, to disregard the ordinary rules of logic, in others still, to have recourse to positive misrepresentations, and, wherever possible, to diffuse the false belief that they possessed the final authority in interpreting the Bible.

#### 1. Neglect of the Fundamental Rules of Interpretation

Fidelity to the text and the context, truthfulness to the authors who are quoted, obligation to seek light from parallel text, while handling difficult passages, and reverence for the canon established by the primitive Church, are some of the fundamental and commonly accepted norms of interpretation which the Reformers were forced to sacrifice, in order to keep intact their new inventions.

THE TEXT AND CONTEXT are both neglected by the Reformers, in order to squeeze out of the words of Paul, in Gal.1, 10, the conclusion that Paul thought it absurd to submit oneself to any authority vested in men, in interpreting the Word of God.<sup>18</sup> Seripando shows that, by drawing such a conclusion, they went not only against the context, but also against the text. "The first fallacy in this argument is that, in this passage, Paul does not deal with that thing which they will have him to," says Seripando.<sup>19</sup> Paul intends to show here, that in preaching the Gospel, he was seeking *the grace of God and not the good will of men*. Coming to the text itself, Seripando demonstrates how heretics were unjust in rendering it from Greek into Latin. Their version was: "*divino suadeo, non humana.*" "Let us use the same words which he (Paul) used", says Seripando, and produces the Greek text: ἀνθρώπους πείθω ἢ τὸν

<sup>18</sup>Cfr. Seripando: *Commentaria*: Q. 6, p. 366.

<sup>19</sup>Cfr. Seripando: *Commentaria*: Q. 6, p. 367.

θεόν (*anthropous peido e ton theon*). These words, by themselves are clear: however, to remove all possible doubt, the Apostle adds an explanation: ἢ ζητῶ ἀνθρώπους ἀρέσκειν (*e dseto anthropous areskein*) (23) (or am I seeking to please men?).<sup>20</sup>

WHILE QUOTING OTHER AUTHORS the reformers used to bring forward those words that served their purpose, cutting off parts of the passage that could prove harmful. We have an example of this, in 'Quaestio 66', where they quote Augustine (Ep. 49), in their defence. Seripando answers them, in the following words: "*Quae autem humana sint acta, quae legis nomen non attingunt, ab Augustino damnata, Augustinus non ipse accopit, si ejus verba, non dimidiata sed integra recitentur.*"<sup>21</sup>

LIGHT FROM PARALLEL TEXTS was evaded by the Protestants, when the passage they were handling, could more easily be understood, in their own sense. Instances of this kind are detected by Seripando in *Quaestiones*, 46, 55, 60 and 67. In *Quaestio* 46 they conclude from Gal. 3, 17, that Paul rejects all good works are useless, neglecting, the text wherein the Apostle insists on the necessity of good works. In *Quaestio* 65, they think that Gal. 4, 5 considers it a crime for any Christian to doubt about his state of grace. Seripando points out to them the words of Paul in Rom 11, which expel from a Christian even the shadow of such a presumption.<sup>22</sup> In *Quaestio* 60 they interpret Gal. 5, 2 as if they never read the Gospels and teaching of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of the apostles. In *Quaestio* 67 they make use of the authority of Gal. 6, 15 to conclude that Paul, insisting on the necessity of a faith which brings about an internal renovation, rejects all external works, as useless for salvation. But Seripando points out that Gal. 5, 6 and 1 Cor. 7, 19 object to such a conclusion.

NOT EVEN THE SACROSANCT CANON OF THE BIBLE could escape the surgery of the Reformers, when it was a question of safeguarding their new invention. In *Quaestio* 4, Seripando observes that the Manicheans, audacious as they were, to deny whatever the Catholic Church taught from scripture, on the plea that the codices were false or corrupt, did not think of denying the established Canon

<sup>20</sup>Cfr. Seripando: *Commentaria*: Q. 6. p. 367.

<sup>21</sup>Cfr. Seripando: *Commentaria*: Q. 66, p. 530.

<sup>22</sup>Cfr. Seripando: *Commentaria*: Q. 55.

of the Bible. What a greater crime is this which the reformers commit, condemning as fictitious and false, sometimes the book of Machabees, sometimes the Epistle of James, sometimes the second Epistle of Peter or John, at other times the Epistle to the Hebrews or the Apocalypse of John (from which book, we bring forward oracles which are obviously against them)?<sup>23</sup>

These are violations of rules of interpretation of the Bible, of which, perhaps, the heretics could be excused to a certain extent: but they were inexcusable, and guilty of deliberate negligence, in having disregarded the common rules of logic for defending their fundamental error.

## 2. Neglect of the Common Rules of Logic

In order to draw from the Apostle's words, the conclusions they wanted, the Reformers sometimes resorted to mal-disposition of the premises, and at other times, to inferences from part to the whole. To illustrate the former, it is enough to take *Quaestio* 17. The Protestants drew up their argument thus, from Gal. 2, 6 (*non justificatur homo ex operibus legis nisi per fidem Jesu Christi*): "*Ubi est fiducia operum, nullum ibi locum habere potest fiducia in Jesum Christum. De fiducia ergo operum, facile negatur et amittitur Christus.*"<sup>24</sup>

Seripando points out the fallacy in this mode of arguing, in these words: "*Si ex Pauli doctrina rite ratiocinari velimus et nihil ad nostrum arbitrium confingere et comminisci, sic erat dicendum, 'Ubi est fiducia operum legis, qualis erat in illis qui ex lege justitiam quaerebant, nullum ibi locum habere potest fiducia in Jesum Christum.'*"<sup>25</sup> To evade the aspect which was displeasing to them, the heretics had to use also the device of concluding from part to the whole. Regarding the attainment of first justice, St. Paul taught the exclusion of all meritorious works. From this, the Protestants argued: 'therefore, good works can be of no use in man's justification'. This, Seripando said, was arguing from the foundation to the edifice (*Quaestio* 1).<sup>26</sup> It is interesting to note with what subtlety, Seripando

<sup>23</sup>Cfr. Seripando: *Commentaria*: p. 358.

<sup>24</sup>Cfr. Seripando: *Commentaria*: Q. 17, p. 416.

<sup>25</sup>Cfr. Seripando: *Commentaria*: Q. 17, p. 416.

<sup>26</sup>Cfr. Seripando: *Commentaria*: Q. 1, p. 344.

points out the valuation of this important rule of dialectics, in *Quaestiones* 36, 42 and 47.<sup>27</sup>

### 3. Positive Distortions

Among the positive means employed by the heretics in order to twist Paul's words to their own purpose, Seripando points out their peculiar mode of handling certain similes used by Paul or invented by themselves, their method of presenting citations from the Fathers, their effort to explain away certain good usages of the Church by merely laughing at them, their attempt to add obscurity to certain clear passages, by the interpretations they give to allied texts, their endeavour to cover up their fallacies, by a profuse, oratorical language, their effort to create aversion for the Catholic Church which claims to possess the exclusive privilege of infallibility, in interpreting the Word of God, and finally, their devices to present themselves as the truly enlightened expositors of the Bible.

IN HANDING THE SIMILES used by Paul, the Protestants were on the look out for the most opportune moment, to drag it to their own purpose. In *Quaestio* 51 they speak of the simile used by Paul, in Gal. 3, 22- 24, they describe the life of the thief in prison and the life of the child under the pedagogue, the thief in prison, keeps off from stealing, not because he does not wish to do so, but because he is obstructed by the walls of the goal. The child too keeps off from evil behaviour, out of fear for the pedagogue and not out of love for virtue. Thus, they conclude, those who preach the necessity of the observance of the Law; preach a hypocritical life, an external honesty. Seripando shows them how wrong they are in applying the simile to those who are under the Law of Christ. St. Paul speaks of the men who had not yet attained the promise of the Spirit. To such men, of course, the Law is a hated prison and a stern school master. But to men who are endowed with faith and the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Law is not an object of hatred but an object of love. The heretics follow the same in the use of the similes, which they themselves have invented.<sup>28</sup>

THE REFORMERS TOO used to have recourse to the authority of the Fathers, in order to confirm their new doctrine, but in doing so, they were often guilty of misrepresentation. In *Quaestio*

<sup>27</sup>Cfr. *Seripando: Commentaria*: pp. 450-452; 459-460; 465-466.

<sup>28</sup>Cfr. *Seripando: Commentaria*: Q. 56, pp. 487 f.

6, Seripando denounces this method, in an implicit way: "*Nos vero omnia Patrum testimonia quibus ad istorum aut nova aut potius rediviva dogmata refellenda, nostraque id est antiqua et Catholica comprobanda utimur, non fecte, fallaciterve detorta, sed vere fideliterve citata ex eorum monumentis et scriptis proferimus in taedium.*"<sup>29</sup> A more direct denunciation of this dishonest practice, can be found in the preface: "*Mittamus praeclara quaedam vera et laudabilia, quae tanquam ova vermitant, ex hominum nostrorum libris dolose excerpta et ad suos usus detorta.*"<sup>30</sup>

THE TEDIOUSNESS OF THE EXTERNAL OBSERVANCES PRESCRIBED BY THE CHURCH, and the voluntary works of penance practised by the religious, as a help for the acquisition and preservation of the Christian virtues, urged the Protestants to combat all such external observances. They could hardly bear the sight of monks whose life reminded them of the centuries old good practices of the church, and silently accused them of having chosen the broader way. To silence the inner voice that accused them, they took to the strange device of laughing at, as often as possible, the external observances of the monks, such as their shaven heads, their peculiar habits, their canonical house and the innumerable other practices of the sort.

In *Quaestio* 65, Seripando explains the exact value of the external practices. In *Quaestio* 67, he openly speaks of the malicious intention that lurked at the bottom of the mania for repeating such questions, again and again, namely, to laugh at those practices, as

<sup>29</sup>*Seripando: Commentaria*: Q. 6, p. 367. In Q. 56, the heretics bring in an example to explain Gal. 4, 9b: "*Quomodo convertimini ad infirma et egena elementa quibus denuo servire vultis?*" They compare the Law to a physician who, as he comes in. To help the patient, administers some medicine to alleviate the patient's pain. But far from curing the patient, that medicine increases his illness, leads him to greater danger, and even to death. At this point, they make a cunning twist: Behold, they say the Physician whom the Catholics call in. To get themselves cured! Seripando admits the aptitude of the simile, but denounces the cunningness employed in its application: "*At vero istorum manu qui nobis bellum faciunt, contortum*". Paul was not beating the air by his argument. He had real adversaries to encounter – the false doctors who taught justification through the Law. But the heretics use this argument against Catholics who never taught that the sickness of the soul is cured by the remedy of the Law.

<sup>30</sup>*Seripando: Commentaria*: Preface, p. 7.

though the monks considered them to be the means of attaining justice, as did, once, their own leader Martin Luther. “*Nihil sane opus est,*” says Seripando, “*quae ad monachorum statum et vitae normam pertinent hoc loco disputare de quibus quid esset sentiendum, supra non tam argumentis quam calumniis provocari et injuriis satis expressimus, docuimusque, non illis monachos magnopere praesidiis niti et confidere quae risus captandi gratia, in argumento cumulantur.*”<sup>31</sup>

TO THROW DARKNESS ON SOME PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE, which were clear in themselves, the Reformers used to give peculiar interpretations to other texts, which are related to them. In *Quaestio* 36, as we have pointed out, the heretics overlooked the simple principles of dialectics, and reached a conclusion wider than the premises.<sup>32</sup> Gal 3, 7 (*qui ex fide sunt ii sunt filii Abrahae*), they said, excluded all works from justification and suggested their *sola fide* theory. In the next question (*Quaestio* 37) the text (Gal. 3, 10) “*quicumque ex operibus legis sunt, sub maledicto sunt*” is taken by them, as a natural conclusion of the work excluding theory, which they had found in Gal. 3, 7.

Seripando points out the trick played by the Reformers, in this instance, “Just as they had misinterpreted, in the last Question, the phrase “*ex fide esse,*” so, here they misinterpret the phrase; “*qui ex operibus legis sunt.*” They do not do so, in good faith, continues Seripando. Lest they should, by such a perverse interpretation, add darkness to clear truths, we should carefully note here, that just as “*ex fide esse*” includes faith and the Holy Spirit and the works of the law of the Spirit, so “*ex operibus legis esse*” excludes faith and the Holy Spirit.”<sup>33</sup>

THERE WAS AN ATTRACTION attached to the false doctrine taught by the heretics. It was brought about, by the oratorical and profuse style of their language in which the doctrine was presented. Seripando speaks of this, in the Preface, where he

<sup>31</sup>*Seripando: Commentaria: Q. 67, pp. 531 f.*

<sup>32</sup>Seripando points out the fallacy in this Question in the following words: “*Esse ex fide excudit quidem justitiam legis, sed non Spiritum Sanctum qui datur ut fiant bona opera*” (Q. 36, p. 451).

<sup>33</sup>*Seripando: Commentaria: Q. 37, p. 453.*

shows how the heretics try to hide their venom under “the straw of verbosity.”<sup>34</sup>

A GREAT IMPEDIMENT for the propagation of the new Gospel of the Reformers was the voice of the Catholic Church which claimed to possess the exclusive privilege of infallibility, in explaining the Word of God. As long as people were persuaded of this God given mission of the Catholic Church, it was impossible to get their listening to whatever went counter to the Church’s teaching.

To shake off this faith from the minds of the people, the Reformers began to attribute to the Church teachings which were contrary to the obvious sense of certain Scripture texts, in *Quaestio* 25, Seripando almost loses patience, at the calumny spread by the Reformers against the church. “*O dolosam et exitiosae malitiae plenam fallaciam*” shouts out Seripando, “*O versutos et callidos homines, o pestem ad interitum natam exitiumque Catholicae veritatis: Vere de talibus magnus dixit Basilius tehnologousin ou theologousin ecquis unquam in Ecclesia Catholica docuit potuisse quemquam suis meritis Christum cognoscere atque ad eum venire?*”<sup>35</sup>

The Reformers spread the calumny that the Catholic Church preached not only “*praeter Evangelium*” but also contrary to the Gospel.<sup>36</sup> They represented the Church as the overthrower of the Word of God;<sup>37</sup> they compared her to the false doctors among the Galatians, who taught the necessity of the works of the Law for the attainment of justification, through Christ;<sup>38</sup> they accused her of being illogical, in concluding from Gal. 6, 15, the necessity of external good works for salvation.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup>*Seripando: Commentaria: Preface, p. 5.*

<sup>35</sup>*Seripando: Commentaria: Q. 25, p. 427.*

<sup>36</sup>*Seripando: Commentaria: Q. 3, p. 353-356.*

<sup>37</sup>Cfr. *Seripando: Commentaria: Q. 3, p. 354.*

<sup>38</sup>*Seripando: Commentaria: Q. 58.*

<sup>39</sup>*Seripando: Commentaria: Q. 67, where, having exposed the fallacy and proved the truth, Seripando concludes: “Digito sane hic mihi locis Paulus ostendit totum hominem sanum factum ac renovatum intus quidem fide et caritate, foris vero sanctis operibus, quibus divina mandata perficiuntur,” pp. 532 f.*

THESE AND OTHER MISREPRESENTATIONS OF THE KIND were repeated again and again, by the Reformers, so as to extort the following remark from the pen of Seripando. “*Quid attinet eadem fere levissime tenuissimeque toties inculcare argumenta? Ad quae omnia, quam prompta, quam facilis, quam brevis est defensio.*”<sup>40</sup> His words, in the Preface, are still stronger. He says, there that he too adopted that method in inculcating the genuine doctrine, in order “to defeat art by art”:

*Cum autem eadem frequenter inculcent argumenta, et iisdem de rebus ad nauseam usque, et crambe repetita saepissime agant, necesse fuit ea in re mihi quoque ineptire et iisdem de rebus persaepe quasi dictata decantare, quod quidem sciebam lectori molestum fore, quum praesertim ὁμειδεῖς ἀθηρογράφεισθαι non adeo possint ut delectent, verum cum haec illorum repetitio et crebra rerum earundem inculcatio artificiosa sit et eo tendat ut suas haereses surorum animis imprimant, cur ego ad veritatem nostrorum hominum pectoribus inferendam, eadem saepius iterare et quasi confirmare vereror, artemque arte refellere?*<sup>41</sup>

#### 4. Arrogation of Unclaimable Authority

Side by side with the means they used to create aversion for the Church’s teaching, the Reformers employed other devices to represent themselves as the truly enlightened expositors of the Bible. The traditional exposition of the doctrine was looked upon with contempt, and the cry: “Back to the Bible” was made to sound and resound in the ears of the people. The traditional teaching was easily dispensed with, by the argument: “no provision has been made for it, in the Bible.”<sup>42</sup>

While he interprets 2 Thess. 2, 15, (“*Itaque fratres, state et tenete traditiones quas didicistis sive per sermonem sive per epistolam nostram*”), Seripando cries out in triumph: “*Ubi sunt qui ἄγραφα omnia derident atque contemnunt quasi non Apostolorum*

<sup>40</sup>Seripando: *Commentaria*: Q. 53, p. 477 # 2.

<sup>41</sup>Seripando: *Commentaria*: Preface, p. 11.

<sup>42</sup>Seripando: *Commentaria*: Q. 1, pp. 344, 346.

*quoque non scripti sermones a manu, ut aiunt, in manum ad nos usque permanere potuerint!*”<sup>43</sup>

Supposing that the Bible contained everything, who can expound to us the real sense hidden under the letter? It is in answer to this question that the Reformers stepped forward as the enlightened men, “boasting that they knew everything and despising others as wanderers like the shadows.”<sup>44</sup> They applied to themselves the mistranslation of the Apostle’s words: “*divina suadeo non humana,*” and declared that they had no need of the help of Cyprian, Ambrose or Augustine, Peter, Paul or John, or even of the angel from heaven, as long as they were certain that what they taught, was divine and not human.<sup>45</sup>

Seripando denounces the audacity of the Reformers, in raising themselves to the level of Paul. In the Preface, he says that the attitude of the Reformers gave one the impression that they considered themselves not only as disciples, but also as equal of, and, sometimes, even as superiors to the prophets and the Apostles.<sup>46</sup> No wonder, if, as Seripando remarks, “whatever came to the mind of these men, they attributed to Paul so that those who spoke against them were considered to oppose not them, but Paul himself, as well as the simple and obvious truth.”<sup>47</sup>

#### 5. Conclusion

To conclude, all the labours of the heretics consisted in uniting or even identifying their cause with that of the Apostle. They gloried that whatever they taught, was Paul’s doctrine given out from some oracle, which was known only to them. They do all this, as proved by Seripando and as remarked by himself, “with enough of insolence.”<sup>48</sup>

<sup>43</sup>Cfr. Seripando: *Commentaria*: Ms. Nap. VII A. 36. 2 Thess. C. II n. V, (2 Thess. 2, 15).

<sup>44</sup>Seripando: *Commentaria*: Preface, p. 6.

<sup>45</sup>Seripando: *Commentaria*: Q. 6, p. 336.

<sup>46</sup>Seripando: *Commentaria*: Preface, pp. 6 sq.

<sup>47</sup>Seripando: *Commentaria*: Q. 2, p. 350.

<sup>48</sup>Seripando: *Commentaria*: Q. 2, p. 350.