

REV. FR. WILLIAM B. GOLDIN, S.T.D.
CLASS 4, *SACRA DOCTRINA: INTRODUCTION TO*
THEOLOGY
24 SEPTEMBER 2020, ST. IRENAEUS CHURCH

Scriptural Hermeneutics

Finishing up Class 3:

Trinitarian Theology and Christology: A Brief Introduction to the Treatise on the Triune God, *De Deo Trino*:

- I. Ecumenical Councils Introduction:
 - a. What is an Ecumenical Council?
 - b. How many Ecumenical Councils have there been?
 - c. What Doctrinal Authority do they have, and why is this important for our reading of the Bible?
 - d. The levels of Doctrinal Teaching in the Church

- II. The First Seven Ecumenical Councils:
 - a. Nicaea I: 325
 - b. Constantinople I: 381
 - c. Ephesus: 431
 - d. Chalcedon: 451
 - e. Constantinople II: 553
 - f. Constantinople III: 680-1

- g. Nicaea II: 787

- III. Following from the First Seven Councils, what do we believe about the One and Triune God?

- IV. Following from the First Seven Councils, what do we believe about Jesus Christ?

- V. Scriptural Hermeneutics
 - a. What is the Bible? – Difference between Protestant and Catholic views
 - b. Is the Bible a Book?
 - c. Why do Biblical genres matter?
 - d. The “Senses” of Scripture:
 - i. Literal
 - ii. Spiritual
 - 1. *Littera gesta docet; quid credas Allegoria; Moralia quid agas; quo tendas Anagogia...* (The Letter speaks of deeds; Allegory to faith; the Moral how to act; Anagogy our destiny)

Citations from the CCC:

116: The *literal sense* is the meaning conveyed by the words of Scripture and discovered by exegesis, following the rules of sound interpretation: “All other senses of Sacred Scripture are based on the literal.”

117: The *spiritual sense*. Thanks to the unity of God’s plan, not only the text of Scripture but also the realities and events about which it speaks can be signs.

(1) The *allegorical sense*. We can acquire a more profound understanding of events by recognizing their significance in Christ; thus the crossing of the Red Sea is a sign or type of Christ's victory and also of Christian Baptism.

(2) The *moral sense*. The events reported in Scripture ought to lead us to act justly. As St. Paul says, they were written “for our instruction”.

(3) The *anagogical sense* (Greek: *anagoge*, “leading”). We can view realities and events in terms of their eternal significance, leading us toward our true homeland: thus the Church on earth is a sign of the heavenly Jerusalem.

119: “It is the task of exegetes to work, according to these rules, towards a better understanding and explanation of the meaning of Sacred Scripture in order that their research may help the Church to form a firmer judgement. For, of course, all that has been said about the manner of interpreting Scripture is ultimately subject to the judgement of the Church which exercises the divinely conferred commission and ministry of watching over and interpreting the Word of God” (*Dei Verbum* 12 §3).

VI. The Origin of the Bible

VII. The Canon of Scripture

Article by George Reid:

“Canon of the Holy Scriptures.—The word *canon* as applied to the Scriptures has long had a special and consecrated meaning. In its fullest comprehension it signifies the authoritative list or closed number of the writings composed under Divine inspiration, and destined for the well-being of the Church, using the latter word in the wide sense of the theocratic society which began with God’s revelation of Himself to the people of Israel, and which finds its ripe development and completion in the Catholic organism. The whole Biblical Canon therefore consists of the canons of the Old and New Testaments. The Greek *kanon* means primarily a reed, or measuring-rod; by a natural figure it was employed by ancient writers both profane and religious to denote a rule or standard. We find the substantive first applied to the Sacred Scriptures in the fourth century, by St. Athanasius; for its

derivatives, the Council of Laodicea of the same period speaks of the *kanonika biblia* and Athanasius of the *biblia kanonizomena*. The latter phrase proves that the passive sense of *canon*, viz., that of a regulated and defined collection, was already in use, and this has remained the prevailing connotation of the word in ecclesiastical literature.”

“The most explicit definition of the Catholic Canon is that given by the Council of Trent, Session IV, 1546. For the O. T., its catalogue reads as follows: ‘*The five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), Josue, Judges, Ruth, the four books of Kings, two of Paralipomenon [Chronicles], the first and second of Esdras (which latter is called Nehemias), Tobias, Judith, Esther, Job, the Davidic Psalter (in number one hundred and fifty Psalms), Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Canticle of Canticles, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Isaias, Jeremias, with Baruch, Ezechiel, Daniel, the twelve minor Prophets (Osee, Joel, Amos, Abdias, Jonas, Micheas, Nahum, Habacuc, Sophonias, Aggeus, Zacharias, Malachias), two books of Machabees, the first and second*’. The order of books copies that of the Council of Florence, 1442, and in its general plan is that of the Septuagint. The divergence of titles from those found in the Protestant versions is due to the fact that the official Latin Vulgate retained the forms of the Septuagint.

The Tridentine decree from which the above list is extracted was the first infallible and effectually promulgated pronouncement on the Canon, addressed to the Church Universal. Being dogmatic in its purport, it implies that the Apostles bequeathed the same Canon to the Church, as a part of the *depositum fidei* [the deposit of the faith]. *But* this was not done by way of any formal decision; we should search the pages of the N. T. in vain for any trace of such action. The larger Canon of the O. T. passed through the Apostles’ hands to the Church tacitly, by way of their usage and whole attitude toward its components; an attitude which, for most of the sacred writings of the Old Testament, reveals itself in the New, and for the rest, must have exhibited itself in oral utterances, or at least in tacit approval of the special reverence of the faithful. Reasoning backward from the status in which we find the deutero books in the earliest ages of post-Apostolic Christianity, we rightly affirm that such a status points to Apostolic sanction, which in turn must have rested on revelation either by Christ or the Holy Spirit. For the deutero-canonicals at least, we needs must have recourse to this legitimate prescriptive argument, owing to the complexity and inadequacy of the N. T. data. [...]

The Tridentine decree defining the Canon affirms the authenticity of the books to which proper names are attached, without however including this in the definition. The order of books follows that of the Bull of Eugenius IV (Council of Florence), except that Acts was moved from a place before Apocalypse to its present position, and Hebrews put at the end of St. Paul’s Epistles. The Tridentine order has been retained in the official Vulgate and vernacular Catholic Bibles. The same is to be said of the titles, which as a rule are traditional ones, taken from the Canons of Florence and Carthage.”¹

¹ George J. Reid, *Canon of the Holy Scriptures: Authoritative Collection of Sacred Writings*, available from: https://www.catholic.com/encyclopedia/canon-of-the-holy-scriptures#II._THE_CANON_OF_THE_OLD_TESTAMENT_IN_THE_CATHOLIC_CHURCH; accessed 13 March 2019, 11:58, and 23 October 2019, 13:52.