

In the School of the Word

*Biblical Interpretation
from the New to the Old Testament*

by Carlos Granados *and* Luis Sánchez-Navarro

Translated by Kristin Towle

With an introduction to the English edition by

Kevin Zilverberg



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© Carlos Granados García y Luis Sánchez Navarro

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Introduction to the English Edition

In the late 2010s I met Fathers Carlos Granados and Luis Sánchez-Navarro as I pursued doctoral studies in Madrid and Rome. These priests, members of the Catholic religious institute of the Disciples of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary (DCJM), impressed me by their human warmth, biblical erudition, fraternal living, and lively faith. The original Spanish edition of the present book convinced me of their keen perception of the role of the faith-filled biblical scholar and of biblical hermeneutics at once scientifically rigorous and ecclesial. Therefore, soon after I became the director of the nascent Saint Paul Seminary Press, I procured the book's English translation rights on the press's behalf.

The reader will perceive differences in style between chapters authored by Granados and Sánchez-Navarro, as well as different formative influences documented in their footnotes. Nevertheless, their years of shared prayer, study, conversation, and ministry have led to this unified literary production bearing witness to that ongoing unity that they live as confreres. Not surprisingly, they frequently reference the same theologians, especially Brevard Childs, Paul Beauchamp, SJ, and Pope Benedict XVI. Granados and Sánchez-Navarro's Spanish publisher, Editorial Verbo Divino, did well to accept this collection of essays ordered thematically into a coherent book;¹ by the present translation, Saint Paul Seminary Press now affirms that book's success.

"Part I: The Church, Living Subject of Sacred Scripture," takes up a

1. For the list of original publications, see 215–216.

foundational theme of the whole book: Sacred Scripture calls for a reading within the community of the People of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the same People constitutes the living subject of Scripture.² Within this context the testimonial character of the New Testament emerges clearly; the texts testify to Christ on behalf of the Church and lead to the Church's growth. The fact of Sacred Scripture's testimonial character constitutes a hermeneutical lynchpin for the authors, as does the precedence of the New Testament for the interpretation of the whole Bible. That is why Sánchez-Navarro has chosen as the topic and title of the book's first chapter "The Testimonial Character of Sacred Scripture" and has focused on the New Testament to make his case. Given the fundamentally testimonial orientation of the Scriptures, any interpretive approach that rejects or fails to take proper account of biblical testimony will lead to false or distorted results. The pretense of a neutrality that prescind from faith when interpreting the Bible in the end is quite biased, and biased such that it fails even on scientific grounds, by failing to apply a method of inquiry fit to its object. Sánchez-Navarro continues to focus on the New Testament in the second chapter, "The Word of God and the Church in the New Testament." He shows the close relationship between the Word, Jesus, and the Church, as he brings to bear the categories established in the previous chapter. The Church is the subject of the Scriptures insofar as she produced them. Yet the Scriptures are the *locutio Dei* or "speaking of God" and have God as their deepest author, so the Church is also object of the Scriptures as she receives their divine message. Only because of the Church was Scripture composed and transmitted, and Scripture becomes incomprehensible when separated from the Church. This obtains not only when giving an account of how the Scriptures came to be, but even for their interpretation in the present: their meaning depends upon their ecclesial context.

Granados offers a reflection in chapter three, "From Scripture in the Body to Scripture in the Church," that complements what has been said so far. He begins by philosophizing about writing (*escritura*, "scripture," in Spanish) and its relationship to speaking. Although he considers the word to have a certain priority over writing, he appreciates the arguments proffered by those who prioritize writing. In fact, the two phenomena are so closely related that scripture, writing, represents the social body of the word. Granados leverages these philosophical tenets to draw profound conclusions about the nature of Sacred Scripture. Holy Writ always refers back to the originating Word of which it is

2. For Pope Benedict XVI's formulation of this principle, see the "Preface to the Spanish Edition" of the present volume, p. 10.

the body and which it expresses. Sacred Word and Scripture, therefore, remain always dynamically linked together in the Church. Hence, Tradition cannot be a mere supplement to Scripture, but rather the principle that ensures that Word and Scripture conserve their mutual union.

Part I culminates in Sánchez-Navarro's chapter four, "The Ecclesial Reading of Scripture." He resumes themes from the previous chapters to describe an approach to Scripture fitted to its content and nature: a reading within the Church. This reading puts down roots in history and approaches the Old Testament with reverence, even as it takes the Messiah of the New Testament as the interpretive key that unites the whole book that is the Bible. This Messiah, Christ, is alive, and the Bible continues to be a living book as believers read it. In the words of the Bible those believers, who are the Church and the bride, hear the voice of the bridegroom resounding from start to finish.

In Part II, "Christ, Exegete of the Fulfillment," the authors focus on the relationship between the two biblical testaments. They argue that the Christian can both respect and venerate the Old Testament on its own terms, even as they find in Jesus, as presented in the New Testament and encountered in faith, the key for unlocking the Old Testament's deepest meaning.

Granados opens Part II with his chapter "How Should We Read the Old Testament? With Christ, Exegete of the Fulfillment." He begins by pointing out those ways in which the Old Testament is an "open book" that admits of multiple interpretations. Although we Christians read it in the school of the New Testament, there is no warrant for reading all of the New in the Old. Rather, he proposes the model of fulfillment, which extends trajectories already present in the Old toward fulfillment in the New. The responsible use of typology can accomplish this, along with readings that elucidate from Old Testament texts the Christian moral (tropological) and theological (anagogical) meanings consistent with the texts' literal meanings.

Sánchez-Navarro's next chapter, "Old and New: Conflict or Fulfillment?" complements that of Granados just before it. The author recognizes that there are indeed discontinuities between the two testaments, yet he affirms their inseparability: "Jesus was incomprehensible without Scripture; now Scripture is incomprehensible without Jesus."³ What Christians now call the Old Covenant was always open to fulfillment in a new one; Sánchez-Navarro shows how the New Testament supports his thesis that fulfillment, not conflict, best labels the dynamic relationship between Old and New. In the next chapter, "The Old-New Relationship, Hermeneutical Key to Scripture," Sánchez-Navarro

3. P. 117.

continues to show how a proper understanding of the two testaments' relationship is crucial for interpreting the Bible. He begins with examples from each Testament to show how they depend on one another, and then he highlights the approaches of Childs and Beauchamp, who each wrote creatively about the unity of the Bible. Sánchez-Navarro concludes that the Bible is a single, unified book. Whereas he focused on the testimonial character of the New Testament in the first two chapters, now he expands that category to speak of Old Testament testimony as well.

Sánchez-Navarro contributes his final chapter for Part II, in "Christians and the Old Testament: The Teaching of Vatican II (*DV* §§15–16)." By focusing on the changes made to the drafts preceding the dogmatic constitution *Dei verbum*, he highlights the document's theological progress. The Council Fathers unabashedly proposed a Christological reading of the whole Bible, yet they took care to adjust their language to show a respect for the Old Testament that became increasingly apparent from one draft to the next. Moreover, *Dei verbum's* careful distinction between revelation itself and the biblical books as a written expression of that revelation remind one of the need for an ecclesial context for biblical interpretation; the Bible must be read in the same Spirit in which it was written in order to perceive the divine revelation to which they bear witness. A Christological reading, aided by the Spirit, does not collapse the Old Testament into the New but reveres it as a distinct expression of divine revelation within the unified whole of the Bible.

Granados concludes part two with a focused case study in chapter nine, "A Model for the Relationship between the Old and New Testaments: 1 Corinthians 9:9," followed by a chapter in which he takes a broad view of the Old Testament to ask whether it gives witness to Christ. 1 Corinthians 9:9 reads: "For it is written in the law of Moses, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain.' Is it for oxen that God is concerned?" Some scholars take issue with this Pauline interpretation of the Old Testament for contorting a text (Deut 25:4) concerning the treatment of animals, so that it concerns humans instead. Granados, however, shows through responsible exegesis that the literal meaning of the Old Testament passage does indeed have to do with humans. In fact, it is open to readings like Paul's, so that 1 Corinthians 9:9 is not an allegorical reading but rather gives Deuteronomy 25:4 "significance" flowing from the literal "meaning" of the text.

In the final chapter of Part II, "Does the Old Testament Give Testimony of Christ? Canonical Exegesis and Postmodern Exegesis," Granados answers his title's question from the perspectives of Childs's canonical exegesis and Walter Brueggemann's postmodern exegesis. Whereas Childs answers affirmatively,

claiming that one must go deeper than the textual level in order to encounter its theological subject matter, Brueggemann focuses on the language of Old Testament discourse and shrinks from any reading that presupposes Christ from the outset. Although Granados appreciates Brueggemann's care to read the Old Testament on its own terms, he ultimately sides with Childs: the Christian cannot prescind from the extra-textual reality of Jesus Christ when seeking the meaning of the Old Testament.

The third and final part of this book, "The Teaching in Benedict XVI's *Verbum Domini*," examines Pope Benedict XVI's 2010 post-synodal apostolic exhortation on the word of God in the life and mission of the Church. In chapter 11, "Listening to the Word: On the Subject of *Verbum Domini*," Sánchez-Navarro examines the first part of the three-part document, the part dedicated to the theological study of the Word and its correct interpretation. He begins by recounting the pertinent aspects of preceding Church documents on Sacred Scripture, and some past teachings on Scripture by the author, Benedict XVI. The pope's own approach based on the *Logos* of the prologue of John's Gospel fits well with that of the present book: God speaks his *Logos* to humankind, and the sacred writings bear written witness to that revelatory Word that continues to elicit a response of faith. The hermeneutic of faith insisted upon all through this book finds here a magisterial validation, for the Bible belongs in the Church and makes sense in the ecclesial context in which it was formed. If it were otherwise, how would one explain the remarkable lives of so many saints nourished by Sacred Scripture, heroic witnesses to the Lord Jesus whom they encountered in the Bible? The pope (and Sánchez-Navarro) calls on all to hear the Word of God in all its freshness and vigor, in the manner of the saints.

In chapter 12, "The Fulfillment of the Scriptures according to *Verbum Domini*," Granados interprets the Binding of Isaac (Gen 22) according to Benedict XVI's document. He strives to respect the Old Testament text even as he affirms its openness to fulfillment in Jesus Christ, thereby applying principles that he laid out in previous chapters, especially his defense of typological interpretations in chapter 5. Granados defends the view that both Abraham and Isaac prefigure Christ, evoking Beauchamp's insight about the increasing concentration of figures that results in paroxysm as their definitive fulfillment draws near.

Sánchez-Navarro contributes the final chapter, "*Verbum Domini*: A Logocentric Vision of the Christian Faith," in which he draws out the magisterial document's implications for recognizing the divine *Logos* pervading every aspect of life. Benedict XVI's own emphasis on the prologue of John's Gospel leaves a logocentric imprint on the document *Verbum Domini*: God has spoken his

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incarnate *Logos* to enter into dialogue with humans, who are called to respond in faith. Doing so results in the Word pervading every aspect of their lives in the communion of the Church. Mary of Nazareth, who had the greatest familiarity with the Word, stands out as the model Christian believer who received the *Logos* in faith and joyfully lived out her ongoing obedience to the Word.

Every chapter of this book pertains to reading the Bible with Christian faith, not as one approach among many, but as a disposition demanded by the New Testament for proper interpretation of both the Old and the New. Even so, the authors' faith never leads them to dismiss history or to discard the tools of the historical-critical method. On the contrary, these sciences allow the faithful reader to take a holistic approach to biblical truth. When the reader also takes full account of the ecclesial reality in which the Bible was formed and transmitted, and in which it must be read still today, he or she encounters the word proclaimed by the text. Indeed, the words of Holy Writ ultimately proclaim *the* Word (*Logos*), Jesus Christ, in whose Spirit they were written.⁴

FR. KEVIN ZILVERBERG

April 10, 2021

4. I would like to thank all those who contributed to this book, beginning with Fathers Carlos Granados and Luis Sánchez-Navarro. Your dedication as priests and scholars inspires me to be a better priest and scholar. Thank you, Dr. Kristin Towle, for your hard work and dedication to making this volume known in a polished English translation. Finally, I would like to thank the rest of my editing and production team for their work: Erika Zabinski, copyeditor; David McEachron, indexer; Maggee Becker, proofreader; and Judy Gilats, typesetter. You carry out your roles with competence and professionalism.

Translator's Foreword

In translating this book about reading Scripture within the Church, I have strived to follow the sentence structure and terminology of the authors as closely as possible, so that their voices could come through in English. I hope that I have made their message clear to English-speaking readers, for it is a crucial message about the truth of God's Word in the Bible.

In their explorations of how to read the Bible faithfully, the authors have included sundry quotations from other scholars. Tracking down the quotations of these scholars in published English editions of their works has proved to be rather arduous. I have felt like Sherlock Holmes at times with this task of locating quotations: the game was definitely afoot in the footnotes! Hence wherever possible, the quotations that appear in the text and the footnotes are from the published English versions of the works. Where no published English edition exists, I have translated from the language of the original publication, or failing that, from the Spanish translation quoted in the Spanish edition.

Scripture citations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition (RSVCE) of the Bible. Regarding the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei verbum*, which is cited and quoted frequently in this book, I have used the Gonzalez edition of the Vatican II documents (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, [1967?]), which is published on the Vatican website. For Pope Benedict XVI's magisterial document *Verbum Domini*, which also appears many times in this work, I have used the translation that is found on the Vatican website and published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Occasionally the RSVCE or the English translations of magisterial texts do not capture what the authors are trying to highlight about wording, so I have followed the authors and their Spanish renditions instead of the RSVCE or the published English translations of magisterial documents.

Bracketed words and statements in this book are added by me as editorial notes.

I wish to offer a note of thanks to those who helped me in this endeavor of

TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

translating *In the School of the Word*: my friend and colleague, Fr. Kevin Silverberg, who is the editor-in-chief of SPS Press and who spurred on this translation; my copyeditor, Erika Zabinski; my husband, Michael, who cared for our children while I worked, and who helped me find many elusive quotations and citations; and my parents, Joe and Mary, and parents-in-law, Mike and Peggy, who offered our family much support as I labored over this work.

At the end of his tremendous book *De Trinitate*, St. Augustine, who had used so many words, images, and arguments to try to understand and explain the Divine Trinity, summed up his book by highlighting how his words fell far short of God. Whenever I finish a theological writing, I try to keep in mind the words from Scripture that St. Augustine cited to show our human limitations and God's grandeur:

“We say many things, and fall short,
and the sum of our words is, ‘He is all.’”
(Sirach 43:27).⁵

May this humble work of translation be all for the glory of God.

KRISTIN TOWLE, PHD

May 10, 2021

5. As cited in Augustine, *On the Trinity*, book 15, chapter 28, trans. Stephen McKenna, CSSR (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1963), 524–525.

Preface to the Spanish Edition

This book has been written over years of reflection on hermeneutical and interpretive themes regarding the Bible, the Old and New Testaments. Taking a look back, we the authors recognize a common key that binds the texts together: Scripture can only be interpreted well when one is introduced “into the school of the Word,” listening to the voice of God from within the group of Jesus’ disciples. The biblical texts only let their meaning unfold in the framework of a threefold obedience: obedience to the received text, obedience to the community of faith that has transmitted it, and obedience to the God who speaks and reveals himself through the text.

The school thus becomes the “theological place” in which we wish to situate the contributions collected in this book. The exegesis of the laboratory has a pretension of sterile objectivity, so typical of modern science, which relegates to the place of “inappropriate prejudice” every consideration related to the faith of the investigator or the interpreter. The aim of the laboratory is that of a person who situates himself before the biblical texts with a microscope, treating the text as a dead tissue, separated from its living organism. The text is thus studied in light of an archaeology, sociology, or historical science that, liberated from their roles as auxiliary sciences, expect to be the ultimate criteria, and even expect to have the power to decide whether certain parts of the text should be cut out in order to adapt them to what the microscope cannot see.

Let us say also, in order not to fall into the other extreme, that the “school” is not the solitariness of the oratory. The scientific reading [of the Bible] conserves its autonomy; we speak specifically of the philological, literary, and historical sciences, and above all the retinue of the human sciences: anthropology, psychology, and sociology, to name a few. All of these sciences provide the framework in which this reading [of Scripture] becomes relevant and truly touches the experience of human beings.

But the “school” makes a singular reference to two elements that we want to illuminate briefly: a communal space shared by all the students (the Church),

in which the Word instructs the reader by directing him or her to a necessary deepening; and a presupposition of an understanding that arises out of one's own human experience and illuminates it ([and thus we speak of] the hermeneutic of faith). We therefore distinguish two elements belonging to the person who situates himself in the "school of the Word."

1. *The ecclesial mark.* The first part of the book is titled "The Church, Living Subject of Sacred Scripture." This part treats the true *leitmotiv*, the central theme of the book. These words of Joseph Ratzinger sum up well the nucleus of what is treated here: "Scripture can become the foundation of life only when it is entrusted to *a living subject*, the same from which it came. Scripture was formed in the People of God guided by the Holy Spirit, and this people, this subject, has not ceased to exist."¹ The Church is the subject that makes Scripture truly alive when it is read.

Let us take note that the sacred author speaks not of what *he saw*, but rather about what *we have seen* (1 John 1:1); he does not present his testimony as something individual, but rather he speaks as a member of a believing community; hence the "we" that we encounter at the end of the gospel of John (21:24). The New Testament is written from a "we" and for an "us." This can also be said about the Christian reading of the Old Testament. And so we also achieve an understanding of the concept of "tradition," which is no more than Scripture read within the Church (*Scriptura in Ecclesia*, as Tertullian said), in other words, Scripture read within the framework that is appropriate to it.

2. *The hermeneutic of faith.* The reader will observe that the whole third part of this book is dedicated to the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Verbum Domini*. This magisterial text contains within it a whole program of renewal for biblical science and pastoral care. It should be, without a doubt, a point of reference for any Christian interested in going deeper into the interpretation of the Bible. In *Verbum Domini*, Pope Benedict XVI calls attention to "the danger of dualism" and a "secularized hermeneutic" (§35). He says the following: if the hermeneutic of faith, the obedience of faith, is disregarded, the interpreter does not stay within strict objectivity, something that is otherwise impossible. On the contrary, the ecclesial hermeneutic is replaced by "another

1. Joseph Ratzinger, "Grenzen kirchlicher Vollmacht: Einführung zum Apostolischen Schreiben 'Ordinatio sacerdotalis,'" 139–153 in Benedict XVI and Gerhard Ludwig Müller, *Künder des Wortes und Diener eurer Freude: Theologie und Spiritualität des Weihesakramentes*, Gesammelte Schriften 12 (Freiburg: Herder, 1994), 146, emphasis added.

hermeneutic, a positivistic and secularized hermeneutic ultimately based on the conviction that the Divine does not intervene in human history. According to this hermeneutic, whenever a divine element seems present, it has to be explained in some other way, reducing everything to the human element. This leads to interpretations that deny the historicity of the divine elements” (§35).²

We see here another axis that has guided the composition of these texts: the necessity of generating a “hermeneutic of faith” that begins with the faith. Faith does not distort the interpretation of Scripture; on the contrary, it adapts its eyes, which are suited to recognize the ultimate meaning of the texts. This “hermeneutic of faith,” which is, therefore, conformed to the text, can unite itself also with a historical hermeneutic that is conscious of its own limits, in such a way that it approaches a methodological whole, a concept of the “science of faith” that permits one to read the biblical text more profoundly.

The subtitle of our book permits us to add yet a third key for reading the texts that follow. The subtitle reads, “Biblical Interpretation from the New to the Old Testament.” The reader will perhaps think it a mistake: would it not be better to say “From the Old to the New Testament”? The formulation of the title, which is certainly provocative, aims to emphasize what is theologically primary, without devaluing the chronological element. The succession “Old Testament-New Testament” continues to be valuable; the importance of historical development is not lessened; but we recognize the primacy of one moment in history (the action of Christ) that gives a new meaning to the whole set [of biblical texts] and allows one to say that in the plan of the “meaning” of the texts, one must go “from the New to the Old Testament.” The collected essays in the second part of the book (“Christ, Exegete of the Fulfillment”) respond to this intuition: it is he who opens up and gives meaning to the Old Testament in light of what is new.

With the subtitle of this book, we are emphasizing the aspect of fulfillment, whose point of departure is the *telos*, the end to which everything is directed. The “final cause” is the explanation that permits us to access the beginning. Looking at the final unfolding of the second creation, we can comprehend the roads that have been taken since the first creation.

Some say that this point of view “reduces the potential of the text to only one meaning” by imposing a Christological principle on texts that in themselves are open-ended. Some say also that this reading makes us incapable of

2. Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini* (September 30, 2010); *The Word of the Lord: Verbum Domini* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2010).

dialogue, since we are redirecting all meaning of the Old Testament to the New Testament. In reality, beginning with the end is the only way of drawing all the text's possibilities out into the light, for only in this way can one see the forest without losing oneself in the trees; only in this way does one have the panoramic view of the whole, which permits one to discern the value of each Old Testament figure. Beginning with the end is also the only way to be able to dialogue with our brothers and sisters who have stayed at the doors of the fulfillment, still seeing from afar the promises, having within their hands a Scripture (our Old Testament) that is on its own open to many channels of fulfillment, and yet remains without a resolution for the enigma of the figures that come to light in it. Dialogue is carried out from the truth, not from a fiction. Dialogue is constructed in the place in which each person recognizes the gift that he has received from God.

And now it only remains for us to thank all those who are behind these pages. Exegesis in the Church is carried out thanks to a great many people who have made it possible. Placed in the "school of the Word," we cannot but remember our parents, our superiors who sent us to study, our teachers at the Pontifical Biblical Institute of Rome, the friends with whom we have gone deep into these enthralling topics . . . and last but not least, our students at the San Dámaso Ecclesiastical University, with whom we currently carry on this adventure of listening to the Word.

CARLOS GRANADOS *and* LUIS SÁNCHEZ-NAVARRO

Madrid, June 3, 2016

Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

“The phrase ‘heart of Christ’ can refer to Sacred Scripture, which makes known his heart, closed before the Passion, as the Scripture was obscure. But the Scripture has been opened since the Passion; since those who from then on have understood it, consider and discern in what way the prophecies must be interpreted.”

(St. Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio in Psalmos*,
chapter 21, paragraph 11; CCC §112)