

Vol. 1, No. 1

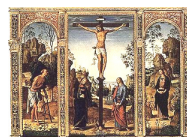
Jan—Feb 2009

Veritas Scripturae

The Bulletin of the St. Jerome Biblical Guild

A publication that focuses upon the doctrines
of Biblical inspiration and inerrancy —
via Tradition and the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

“Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth” (Jn 17:17)



From the Director: In the Beginning

Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Veritas Scripturae* (“The Truth of Scripture”) — the bulletin of the St. Jerome Biblical Guild. Our publication, planned at six per year, is dedicated to Biblical inspiration and inerrancy; two essential doctrines of the Catholic Faith. *Veritas Scripturae* will attempt, by God’s grace, to elucidate these two related doctrines; so monumental for Catholic dogma, vital for Biblical studies, and consoling for the interior life.

Each issue will offer several features. The front page will contain some words “From the Director.” As well, a “Scripture Memorization & Exegesis” section will present Bible texts to learn by heart; with an accompanying doctrinal explanation and practical application.

Inside features will include four relevant quotations, with

a brief commentary, which illumine the doctrines of Biblical inspiration and inerrancy. “The Church Fathers & Scripture” will consider writings that span the Apostolic age to the Eighth Century. “St. Thomas Aquinas & Revelation” will ponder the wisdom of the Angelic Doctor. “The Magisterium Speaks” will examine pronouncements from the Church’s teaching office. “The Pontifical Biblical Commission Texts” will discuss forgotten but valuable excerpts.

Remaining features will contain an “Inerrancy Basics” section on rudimentary points for upholding Scripture’s veracity. The back page ends with a “Book Recommendation,” in or out of print, that aids the comprehension of God’s word.

Catholics should appreciate and treasure Tradition. There-

fore, each issue will employ old as well as new material. We must not neglect the past.

Veritas Scripturae aims for a wide audience. The bulletin will keep a simple format, as it attempts to provide a variety of pertinent information for the student of the Bible. At the least, the bulletin will be a point of departure for further research and study.

God willing, *Veritas Scripturae* will offer a small contribution to the large task of explaining and defending the Bible. In the end, the bulletin is a modest attempt to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and Holy Mother Church (cf. Lk 17:7-10; Eph 3:20-21).

Please keep this apostolate and its Director in your daily prayers (cf. 1 Thess 5:17).

Godspeed,
Salvatore J. Ciresi

St. Jerome (A.D. 343-420) says:

“Read assiduously and learn as much as you can. Let sleep find you holding your Bible, and when your head nods let it be resting on the sacred page” (*Letter* 22.17.2; A.D. 384).

“Constantly read the Bible; in fact, have it always in your hands. Learn what you have got to teach” (*Letter* 52.7.1; A.D. 394).

“Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ” (*Commentary on Isaiah* bk. 18 prologue; A.D. 408-410).

“Love the Bible and wisdom will love you...” (*Letter* 130.20; A.D. 414).

Contents:

The Church Fathers & Scripture: St. Augustine’s <i>Epistle</i> 82	2
St. Thomas Aquinas & Revelation: <i>Bachelor of Scripture Address</i>	2
The Magisterium Speaks: Pope Pius XII’s <i>Humani Generis</i> 22	2
The Pontifical Biblical Commission Texts: An Introduction, Part I	3
Inerrancy Basics: The Virtue of Humility	3
Scripture Memorization & Exegesis: continued from pg. 1	3
Book Recommendation: Hagerty’s <i>The Authenticity of the Sacred Scriptures</i>	4

Scripture Memorization & Exegesis: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17).

St. Paul reveals the locus classicus for Biblical inspiration. The Greek word behind “inspired” is *theopneustos*: a term without appearance in the rest of the New Testa-

ment. The word is usually rendered either “inspired by God” (Confraternity Rheims, Kleist & Lilly, Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition, Jerusalem, New Jerusalem, New American) or “divinely inspired” (Haydock Rheims, Spencer, Knox). The Latin Vulgate has *divinitus inspirata*.

Some non-Catholic Bibles contain either “breathed out by God” (English Standard) or “God-breathed” (Amplified,

The Emphasized New Testament, New International).

Theopneustos is a compound of *theos* (“God”) and *pneō* (“blow” or “breathe out”). The term indicates God, as it were, “breathing” His Divine Spirit during the composition of the sacred books.

Dogmatic Theology designates this work a “charism.” This is an extraordinary grace please turn to pg. 3



The Church Fathers & Scripture: St. Augustine's *Epistle 82*

The Doctor of Grace's letter to his friend Jerome in Bethlehem, composed A.D. 405, reads: "For I confess to your Charity [Jerome] that I have learned to yield this respect and honor only to the canonical books of Scripture: of these alone do I most firmly believe that the authors were completely free from error. And if in these writings I am perplexed by anything which appears to me opposed to truth, I do not hesitate to suppose that either the manuscript is faulty, or the translator has not caught the meaning of what was said, or I myself have failed to understand

it... I believe, my brother, that this is your own opinion as well as mine. I do not need to say that I do not suppose you to wish your books to be read like those of Prophets or of Apostles, concerning which it would be wrong to doubt that they are free from error" (*Epistle 82.3*).

The Magisterium has made significant use of this Augustinian letter in Pope Leo XIII's *Providentissimus Deus* II.D.3b (1893), and Vatican II's *Dei Verbum* 11, fn. 5 (1965).

St. Augustine's criteria for addressing Biblical difficulties is taken almost verbatim from

his earlier work, *Against Faustus the Manichean* 11.5 (A.D. 400). The African bishop is lucid in both tomes.

Firstly, there may be a text discrepancy that crept into the hand copied document. Secondly, a commentator may be explaining the words incorrectly. Thirdly, the reader may not be able to comprehend the meaning.

Consider the last guideline — equivalent to "user error." This should be the first consideration by those who impute error to God's word: the problem is the human reader, not the Divine Revealer.

St. Thomas Aquinas & Revelation: *Bachelor of Scripture Address*



Returning to Paris in 1252 for advanced theological studies, the Angelic Doctor delivered the following message, in part, in the 1250s: "Eternal and steadfast is the truth of Scripture: 'heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.' It will last for ever, this law of an authority who is above change — 'the Lord of Hosts hath decreed, and who can disannul it?', who is constant — 'I am the Lord of Hosts and I change not,' and who is true — 'the lip of truth shall be steadfast

forever.' Then nothing is more useful than its teaching: 'I am the Lord thy God that teach thee profitable things.' Follow it and we shall come to life. First, to the life of grace, to which the Holy Scripture dispose us: 'the words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.' By grace our spirit lives with God: 'I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me.' Then to the righteousness of good living expressed in good works, guided thereto by Holy Scripture: 'thy justifications I will never forget, for by them

thou hast given me life.' Finally, to the life of glory..." (*Bachelor of Scripture Address*).

Aquinas masterfully links quotes from both Testaments (Lk 21:33; Is 14:27; Mal 3:6; Prov 12:19; Is 48:17; Jn 6:64; Gal 2:20; Ps 119:93); a testimony to the unity of Scripture. Thomas then confirms its eternal and immutable truth, authority, and use as a conduit to grace. He states, as well, that God's word is a pathway to the beatific vision.

The Magisterium Speaks: Pope Pius XII's *Humani Generis* 22



Pope Pius XII (r. 1939-1958) writes in his 1950 encyclical *Humani Generis* (Concerning Some False Opinions Threatening to Undermine the Foundations of Catholic Doctrine) 22: "For some go so far as to pervert the sense of the Vatican Council's definition that God is the author of Holy Scripture, and they put forward again the opinion, already often condemned, which asserts that immunity from error extends only to

those parts of the Bible that treat of God or of moral and religious matters. They even wrongly speak of a human sense of the Scriptures, beneath which a divine sense, which they say is the only infallible meaning, lies hidden."

Pius appeals to an Ecumenical Council, Vatican I, to assert the Bible's divine origin. He then states the Bible's inerrancy is not limited to faith

and morals, while insisting such a restriction has been denounced repeatedly by the Church's teaching authority. Pius also rejects attributing error to the "human" aspect of Holy Writ. This last point is crucial — the critic may try to evade the divine source of inspiration (with its consequent inerrancy), by a clever plea to the "human" author in contrast to the divine. The Pontiff rejects this kind of erroneous appeal.

The Pontifical Biblical Commission Texts: An Introduction, Part I

The Pontifical Biblical Commission (PBC) was established 1902, by Pope Leo XIII, with the Apostolic Letter *Vigilantiae studii* (Instituting a Commission for Biblical Studies). Leo states a duty of this Commission is to “find here and from every quarter the most thorough interpretation which is demanded by our times, and be shielded not only from every breath of error, but also from every temerarious opinion” (*Vigilantiae* 3).

Pope St. Pius X writes later in his 1907 Motu Proprio “all are bound in conscience to submit to the decisions of the Biblical Commission... in the same

way as to the Decrees which appertain to doctrine, issued by the Sacred Congregations and approved by the Sovereign Pontiff” (*Praestantia Sacrae Scripturae* 4).

The earliest PBC pronouncements (1905-1933) were formatted in single or multiple questions; with an affirmative or negative response, and with an occasional comment. Two examples: *On the Tacit Quotations Contained in Holy Scripture* (1905) and *On the Author, Date of Composition, and Historical Truth of the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (1911). Other statements of varying authority

would follow, such as *On the Use of Versions of Sacred Scripture in the Vernacular* (1943), and *The Time of the Documents of the Pentateuch and the Literary Form of the Eleven Chapters of Genesis* (1948). Instructions came too, such as *The Proper Way to Teach Sacred Scripture in Seminaries and Religious Houses* (1950) and *The Historical Truth of the Gospels* (1964).

Pope Paul VI revamped the PBC in 1971. This reconstitution, and the current status of the original PBC statements, will be discussed in the next issue of *Veritas Scripturae*.



Inerrancy Basics: The Virtue of Humility

Any toil for upholding the Bible's veracity seems to call out three principles. Firstly, such work must be done in union with Jesus Christ. Secondly, such labors need to conform to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. Thirdly, such efforts should be permeated by the virtue of humility. The first two principles are obvious; consider the third — humility.

The student of God's word (we are all students in a sense) knows his desires,

attempts, and possible modicum of “success” in safeguarding Scripture is, in the end, attributed to God's grace and mercy. Jesus Christ says “apart from Me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5). St. Paul exclaims “What have you that you did not receive?” (1 Cor 4:7). St. James states “every perfect gift is from above” (Jas 1:17). Many similar passages could be cited.

This “divine dependence” merges with Scripture's insistence upon humility. The Lord

tells us “learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart” (Mt 11:29). Similar truths are revealed in Philippians 2:3; James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6, to name just three additional verses. No doubt, the sin of pride will stifle our efforts.

We conclude: the Scripture apostolate must recognize its complete reliance, in a spirit of meekness, upon the Redeemer. It seems wise to recall such facts as we pray, study, and teach God's word.

The student of God's word (we are all students in a sense) knows his desires, attempts, and possible modicum of “success” in safeguarding Scripture is, in the end, attributed to God's grace and mercy.

Scripture Memorization & Exegesis: cont'd from pg. 1

God gives to the Biblical writers (“hagiographers”); not for their own holiness, but for the benefit of the entire Church. This supernatural motion is infallibly efficacious, and yields a supernatural effect.

At least four Ecumenical Councils mention this special grace: Florence's *Decree for the Jacobites* (1441-2), Trent's *Decree Concerning the Canonical Scriptures* (1546), Vatican I's *Dei Filius* (1870),

and Vatican II's *Dei Verbum* (1965).

Consider the practical application. Scripture is revealed for “teaching” (*didaskalian*); thus deserves a prominence for the science of theology. Scripture is for “reproof” (*elegmon*); thus may be a light for exposing our errors in faith or morals. Scripture is additionally for our “correction” (*epanorthōsin*); thus could aid in overcoming those very errors brought to

our attention. Finally, Scripture is for “training in righteousness” (*paideian en tēn dikaiosynē*); thus should foster our supernatural life with the Triune God.

This “Scripture” (*graphē*), no doubt, is the greatest piece of writing given to mankind. Each of us should spend less time “online” and more time reading God's precious word.

Next issue: the complement 2 Peter 1:20- 21.



Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam

J. M. J.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Mt 22:37).

"Jesus said to them, 'Is not this why you are wrong, that you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God?'" (Mk 12:24).

"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He [Christ] interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Lk 24:27).

"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (Jn 20:30-31).

www.stjeromebiblicalguild.org

To subscribe (no charge or obligation) to *Veritas Scripturae*, send your name and e-mail address to salciresi@aol.com. Please type into the subject line "VS subscription."

You may unsubscribe at any time.

The St. Jerome Biblical Guild is an educational apostolate founded and directed by Mr. Salvatore J. Ciresi. The Guild explains and defends Sacred Scripture in view of Tradition and the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. The apostolate takes its name from St. Jerome, "The Father of Biblical Studies," and labors by God's grace to accomplish the following: (1) explain the various Bible study tools and academic resources; for individual research or parish groups, (2) present studies from Scripture on specific books such as the Gospel of St. Luke, or general themes such as the Biblical roots of home-schooling, (3) promote the classic exegetical methods and insights found within Tradition; with attention to the Church Fathers and St. Thomas Aquinas, and (4) support the Magisterial doctrines of Biblical inspiration and inerrancy; the latter the main focus of the apostolate. The St. Jerome Biblical Guild places itself under the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary. The Guild also seeks the intercession of St. Thérèse of Lisieux for favors and protection. In all things, the apostolate seeks the greater glory of God (cf. 1 Chr 28:9; Ps 37:5; Jer 9:23-24; Jn 15:5; Col 3:17; Jas 4:13-15).

Mr. Salvatore J. Ciresi served two tours in the U.S. Marine Corps and now works in the aviation sector. He earned his M.A. in Theological Studies, with a Scripture concentration, from the Notre Dame Graduate School of Christendom College, where he serves on the adjunct faculty. His ecclesiastical activities include past co-host of Cross Talk, a Catholic radio program in VA; a contributor on behalf of the Arlington Diocese to the 2005 revision to the *National Directory for Catechesis*; a former board member for a private Catholic school; a past columnist for the *Arlington Catholic Herald*; a contributor to *The Latin Mass: The Journal of Catholic Culture and Tradition*; and founder and director of the St. Jerome Biblical Guild. Mr. Ciresi resides with his wife and children in VA.

Book Recommendation:

Hagerty's *The Authenticity of the Sacred Scriptures*

Protestant writers today are publishing various books that explain and defend the trustworthiness of Sacred Scripture. Our separated brethren are releasing such tomes in major publishing houses such as Baker, Eerdmans, InterVarsity, Kregel, Moody, Nelson, and Zondervan. These books contain useful information (with some reservations). Similar works (without reservations) that uphold the Bible, written by Catholic clergy, were common in former decades. One such treatise merits attention — Cornelius Hagerty, C.S.C., *The Authenticity of the Sacred Scriptures* (Houston: Lumen Christi, 1969) 339 pp.

Fr. Hagerty (d. 1977) studied Theology and Philosophy, received a doctorate in the latter, and taught both subjects along with Apologetics and Dogma at

the university level. He wrote his own textbooks for class.

The Authenticity of the Sacred Scriptures presents a classic approach to explaining and defending the Bible. A foundation is laid with chapters on "Revelation," "Miracles," "Great Religious Facts," and the "History of Israel." Next, Scripture is explained with chapters on "Messianic Prophecies," the "Canon of the Old Testament," and "Texts of the Bible." Then, a defense is given with chapters on the "Modern Attack on the Bible," "Reaction to the Higher Criticism," the "Attack on the Authenticity of the New Testament," the "Authenticity of the Gospels," "Internal Evidence," "Sources Other Than the Gospels," the "Integrity of the Gospels," and "Veracity of the Gospels."

Although dated in places, the overall value of the book is timeless. Its usefulness is not restricted to Biblical Studies; the text is also a boon for Apologetics and Dogmatic Theology.

Below is one gem from Fr. Hagerty: "The miracles of the Bible are related as historical facts. If the Evangelists were eyewitnesses or disciples of eyewitnesses, twentieth century critics have no valid reason for rejecting their reports. The critics were not present; they are in no position to judge. Their attempts to rewrite the history of Israel succeed only in producing fiction" (p. 31).

The Authenticity of the Sacred Scriptures is out of print, but www.bookfinder.com may have copies. Let us pray for the revival of such literature, and for the repose of Fr. Hagerty's soul.

