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# 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... Year Three

*Veritas Scripturae* (VS) begins year three with the 11th issue. The time has passed quickly since the inaugural bulletin in 2009. I remain grateful for the kind words of encouragement from readers.

A few administrative things. Firstly, a reminder: VS may be forwarded to any individual or group, or printed for private or public usage. Web sites or blogs may link to the bulletin; past issues are accessible at [www.stjeromebiblicalguild.org](http://www.stjeromebiblicalguild.org).

Secondly, if any subscribers anticipate a change to their e-mail addresses, then please notify me. I receive a handful of failed delivery notices every mailing — only the subscribers can rectify this dilemma. Be assured, addresses are never disclosed to the public.

Thirdly, I apologize for the tardiness of VS (mea maxima culpa). Other duties, at home and among two jobs, do take precedence. VS should be back on schedule soon.

Now, on to methodology. Every issue of VS, readers will see, contains a number of quotations. This is by design. Orthodox citations are always a valuable tool for the explanation and defense of Holy Scripture's inspiration and inerrancy. True, VS does contain "original" materials. But I appreciate, and often quote (with attribution), the works of others. My personal library contains many books, both in and out of print, which make the case for the reliability of God's Word. My opinion (take it or leave it) is that the dissemination of pertinent cita-

tions from such books is a boost for scholarship. Of course, the use of a textbook is not an endorsement of its entire contents.

Lastly, the actual quotations. Scripture texts, unless noted, are taken from the *Revised Standard Version* (reformatted when needed). Patristic texts, unless noted, are from the public domain 38 volume set (reformatted and adapted with contemporary English when needed). Other quotations are referenced appropriately.

The Lord Jesus says “*apart from Me you can do nothing*” (Jn 15:5). Dear readers, once again, I humbly request your prayers before the “*throne of grace*” (Heb 4:16).

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).

## Scripture Memorization & Exegesis: A Brief Overview of Psalm 119



Psalm 119, at 176 verses, is the longest Psalm. Its purpose was to inculcate and express devotion to God's law, so that obedience to His will became the guiding principle of life. The Psalm was also meant to ignite zeal for God's religion, and so preserve one from laxity or paganism (cf. C. Calian, *The New Psalter*, 420).

The Psalm's acrostic (i.e., alphabetical) structure has 22 stanzas of eight verses each. Each line starts with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Thus, in verses 1-8, each verse begins with the letter Aleph; in verses 9-16, each verse begins with Beth; etc. The 22 stanzas correspond to the letters of the Hebraic alphabet (Cf. J. Walvoord, et al., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 879).

Psalm 119 contains about 1,064 Hebrew words. Eight main terms are utilized to describe God's Word:

“law” (*torāh*)  
“testimonies” (*'ēdōt*)  
“precepts” (*piqqūdīm*)  
“commandments” (*mīswōt*)  
“statutes” (*huqqīm*)  
“ordinances” (*mišpātīm*)  
“word” (*dābār*)  
“words” (*imrāh*).

For more discussion, see F.F. Bruce, gen. ed., *The International Bible Commentary*, 638; F. Gaebelein, gen. ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* V:737-738; and G. Howley, et al., *The New Layman's Bible Commentary*, 685.

Below is a sample of verses:  
“Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with their whole heart” (Ps 119:2).

“How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to Thy word” (Ps 119:9).

“Thy testimonies are my delight, they are my counselors” (Ps 119:24).

“Behold, I long for Thy precepts; in Thy righteousness give me life!” (Ps 119:40).

“The Law of Thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces” (Ps 119:72).

“Oh, how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day” (Ps 119:97).

“Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Ps 119:105).

“The sum of Thy word is truth; and every one of Thy righteous ordinances endures forever” (Ps 119:160).

A great Psalm for meditation.

## Inerrancy Basics: Immorality in the Bible

Secularists will highlight the moral failings recorded in the Holy Scriptures, as a way to discredit its divine inspiration (while the very same secularists ignore the moral failings of a number of political, social, and non-Christian religious leaders that are documented in history). Hear Fr. C. Lattey: “The morality of the Bible has often been attacked; but often also the difficulty arises from looking at the matter from a wrong standpoint. Nobody can deny for a moment that evil thoughts, words and deeds are recorded in the Bible; that, however, in itself presents no ground of accusation. Formal error in this case would consist, not in recording, but in inculcating bad morality; for a valid objection, therefore, it would have to be shown both that the act or intention was wrong, and that the Scripture approved of it” (*Back to the Bible*, 42).

The Bible chronicles many kinds of failings — but doesn't endorse them. Consider some examples. Psalm 14:1 testifies to the fool who interiorly denies God's existence; but the text doesn't validate such thinking. To the contrary, the Bible shows such thoughts have no merit per Romans 1:18-2:16. Matthew 26:69-75 bears witness to St. Peter's public denial of the Savior; but the text doesn't condone such a betrayal. To the contrary, the Bible tells us that during an interrogation, a believer is not to be ashamed of his faith per 1 Peter 3:15. 2 Samuel 11:1-5 records David's adultery; but the text doesn't approve this misconduct. To the contrary, the Bible condemns this immoral action in the next chapter in 2 Samuel 12:1-14. Holy Writ reveals the chasm between good and evil.

What about the divine commands to take human life (e.g., Josh 10:28-40)? Fr. F. Gigot says “since God is the supreme master of life and death, He could, without contravening the absolute principles of morality, issue such a sentence of extermination and have it carried out by whatever instruments he deemed fit in His wisdom” (*Biblical Lectures*, 110). Fr. C. Hagerty gives additional clarity: “The Israelites were ordered by God to exterminate the inhabitants of Palestine because of their wickedness. God had as much right to do this as he had to drown the wicked at the time of the deluge. He knew the cruelty, sensuality and idolatry of the Chanaanites; he knew they would be a bad influence upon his chosen people” (*The Authenticity of the Sacred Scriptures*, 63).

“Nobody can deny for a moment that evil thoughts, words and deeds are recorded in the Bible; that, however, in itself presents no ground of accusation.”

Fr. C. Lattey

## The Church Fathers & Scripture: St. Cyril of Jerusalem on the Unity of the Bible

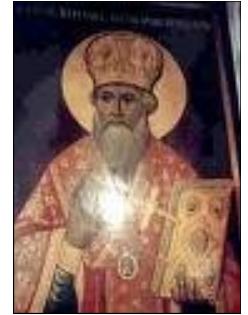
St. Cyril of Jerusalem (A.D. 315—386) once preached: "Now these, the divinely-inspired Scriptures of both the Old and the New Testament, teach us. For the God of the two Testaments is One, who in the Old Testament foretold the Christ who appeared in the New; who by the Law and the Prophets led us to Christ's school. 'For before faith came, we were kept in ward under the Law,' and 'the Law has been our tutor to bring us unto Christ.' And if ever you hear any of the heretics speaking evil of the Law or the Prophets, answer in the sound of the Savior's voice, saying, Jesus 'came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it'" (*Catechetical Lectures* 4.33; A.D. 350).

In his renowned discourses of basic Christian instruction, St. Cyril lays stress on one of the fundamentals of Scripture study — the unity of the Bible. Put another way: one must distinguish between the two Testaments, but one must never place a total breach between them. There is no doubt that the New Covenant writings are best understood, in tandem, with the Divine Revelation that was disclosed before the Incarnation.

Consider just one of the Evangelists. Look at the string of texts from the prophet Isaiah that are cited, for doctrinal and apologetical reasons, in St. Matthew's Gospel. There is Matthew 1:18-25 with Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 2:19-23 with Isaiah 11:1; Matthew 4:12-17

with Isaiah 9:1-2; Matthew 8:14-17 with Isaiah 53:4; Matthew 12:15-21 with Isaiah 42:1-4; and Matthew 13:10-17 with Isaiah 6:9-10. It is clear: a familiarity with the prophet's book will deepen one's comprehension, and appreciation, of the Matthean Gospel.

Dr. Edward Sri makes a good point: "Behind the many different languages, authors, literary genres, and time periods in the Bible lies one unified story that starts at the beginning of time and continues to the present moment. The seventy-three diverse books of the Bible, each in its own particular way, together unfold the drama of God's plan of salvation, which has Jesus Christ's death and resurrection at the center" (*The Bible Compass*, 36-37).



## St. Thomas Aquinas & Revelation: The Historicity of the Person of Job

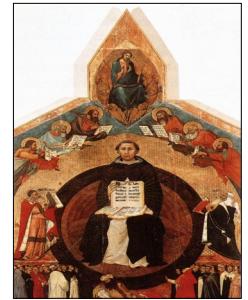
St. Thomas Aquinas writes in the prologue to his commentary on the "minor prophet" Job: "Now there have been some men to whom it has seemed that the Job in question was not something in the nature of things but that he was a kind of parable made up to serve as a theme for a debate over providence, the way men often invent hypothetical cases to debate over them. And although it makes little difference one way or another to the intention of the book, it is important as far as the truth itself is concerned. For the opinion that Job was not a man in the nature of things seems to be contrary to the authority of Sacred Scripture, for in Ezekiel 14:14 the Lord is represented as saying, 'If those three men — Noah, Daniel, and Job — are in that land, they will free their souls

by their justice.' Now it is manifest that Noah and Daniel were men in the nature of things. For this reason there should be no doubt about the third man named along with them, namely, Job. Also, in James 5:11 is said, 'Look! We bless those who have endured; you have heard of Job's suffering and have seen the Lord's purpose.' So, then, one must believe that Job was a man in the nature of things" (A. Damico, trans., *The American Academy of Religion, Classics in Religious Studies, No. 7: Thomas Aquinas, The Literal Exposition on Job*, 68-69).

The Common Doctor admits the inspired teachings found in Job could have been revealed by a parable (i.e., an earthly story with a heavenly meaning). But Thomas indicates if

one holds Job not to be a real person, then one is in conflict with Holy Writ.

Aquinas cites specific texts (Ez 14:14; Jas 5:11) that name Job; not as a character in a parable, but as a real, historical person. Look also at Job 1:1: "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job." This opening line is expressed as if it were history, in the same manner history is revealed in 1 Samuel 1:1: "There was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim of the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah." Job 1:1's literary style is also similar to the undisputed history of Luke 1:5: "In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah." "Uz" is also a real place: the large area east of the Jordan River (Lam 4:21).



## The Magisterium Speaks: Pope Benedict XVI's *Verbum Domini*, Part I



The highly respected Father Kenneth Baker, S.J., in an editorial for *The Latin Mass* Vol. 20, No. 1, describes Pope Benedict XVI's Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* (2010) as a "profound, comprehensive, and unified theology of the Word of God. From now on those who wish to study Holy Scripture in a serious way will have to be familiar with the contents of this document..." (p. 2).

*Verbum Domini* 19 is titled "Sacred Scripture, inspiration and truth." It contains four paragraphs. Here is the first: "A key concept for understanding the sacred text as the word of God in human words is certainly that of *inspiration*. Here too we can suggest an analogy: as the word

of God became flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, so sacred Scripture is born from the womb of the Church by the power of the same Spirit. Sacred Scripture is 'the word of God set down in writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit' [Dei Verbum 9]. In this way one recognizes the full importance of the human author who wrote the inspired texts and, at the same time, God himself as the true author."

The first point to consider: note the emphasis given by the Pontiff to the charism of inspiration (italicized in the original). The inerrantist must strive to comprehend this charism, which undergirds the reliability of the Scriptures.

A second consideration: the Pope's analogy between the Word Incarnate and the Word inscripturated. This approach has a rich Magisterial history. Pope Pius XII's *Divino Afflante Spiritu* 37 (1943) says: "For as the substantial Word of God became like to men in all things, 'except sin,' so the words of God, expressed in human language, are made like to human speech in every respect except error." This line is cited verbatim in II.6 of Pope John Paul II's 1993 address that accompanied the Biblical Commission text, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*. Similar language is used in Vatican II's *Dei Verbum* 13 (1965) and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 101 (1997). Inerrancy and impeccability are congruent.

## The Pontifical Biblical Commission: The Response of 1907, Part II



*On the Author and Historical Truth of the Fourth Gospel* (1907), after it addresses the external aspects of Johannine authorship in question one, moves ahead to the internal reasons in question two: "2. Internal Evidence for Authenticity — Whether also the internal reasons, which are drawn from the text of the Fourth Gospel considered separately, and from the testimony of the writer and the manifest kinship of the Gospel itself with the First Epistle of the Apostle John, must be considered to confirm the tradition which unhesitatingly attributes the Fourth Gospel to the same Apostle. And whether the difficulties which are drawn from the comparison of the same Gospel with

the other three, bearing in mind the diversity of time, of scope, and of the hearers for whom or against whom the author wrote, can be reasonably solved, as the holy Fathers and Catholic commentators have done at some times. Answer: In the affirmative to both parts."

The Commission mentions three points: (1) the Fourth Gospel itself, (2) its affiliation with 1 John, and (3) the Johannine Gospel's relation to the Synoptic Gospels.

For now, consider point two. St. John's Gospel and 1 John exhibit a connection. John 19:35 reads, "He who saw it has borne witness — his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth — that you also may believe." John 21:24 says, "This is the disci-

ple who is bearing witness to these things, and who has written these things; and we know that his testimony is true." This fits with 1 John 1:1-3: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life — the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us — that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing this that our joy may be complete." All three extracts seem to be from the same hand. More to come.

## Addressing Bible Difficulties: Preliminary Factors

The Holy Scriptures, although clear in many sections, reveal a number of passages that are difficult to comprehend by the human mind. Nonetheless, the Bible student has nothing to fear from such difficulties.

Pope Pius XII's *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943) encourages the Church Militant: "Nevertheless no one will be surprised, if all difficulties are not yet solved and overcome; but that even today serious problems greatly exercise the minds of Catholic exegetes. We should not lose courage on this account; nor should we forget that in the human sciences the same happens as in the natural world; that is to say, new beginnings grow little by little and fruits are gathered only after many labors. Thus it has happened that certain disputed points, which in the past remained unsolved and in

suspense, in our days, with the progress of studies, have found a satisfactory solution. Hence there are grounds for hope that those also will by constant effort be at last made clear, which now seem most complicated and difficult" (44).

With Pius' words in mind, here are some preliminary factors to consider during one's interaction with the Sacred Page.

1. The Bible makes authoritative claims for itself, which have been part and parcel of over two millennia of Christian history. 2 Timothy 3:16 says "All Scripture is inspired by God." 2 Peter 1:21 asserts "men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." John 10:35 reveals the "Scripture cannot be broken." Such statements (among many) ought to instill confidence in one's quest for answers to Bible intricacies.

2. Tradition is our friend in this pursuit. The voices from the past have recognized that the complexities in God's Word do not compromise its veracity. Hence, today's defender of the Bible is in good ecclesiastical company.

3. The Catholic Magisterium, officially at the ordinary (i.e., universal) and extraordinary (i.e., solemn) levels, has never limited or restricted Holy Writ's inerrancy to matters of faith and morals. Therefore, one's labors to find solutions to Bible difficulties, to include verses that are popularly categorized as "history" and "science," is a service to orthodoxy and Holy Mother Church.



4. Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium are on the side of unlimited or unrestricted Biblical inerrancy. The burden of proof is on the critics.

## The Biblical World: The Reliability of Genesis 1-11

The past two columns have mentioned the difficulties in chronology with respect to Genesis 1-11. Nonetheless, the caveat in *Veritas Scripturæ* Vol. 2, No. 3 still applies: "Note well: the absence of fixed dates for Genesis 1-11 should never bring its veracity, or historicity, into doubt." In other words, any uncertainties in chronology must not lead to the erroneous conclusion that the reliability of Genesis 1-11 is uncertain.

Consider some notable facts about the early portion of the book of origins. Genesis 1-11 discloses approximately 64 geographical names, 88 personal names, and 48 generic names. The chapters also reveal about 21 identifiable cultural items to include gold, bdellium, onyx, brass, iron, gopher wood, bitumen/tar,

bricks, stone, harp, pipe, cities and towers. Contrast those details with the main religious book of the Muslim religion: Genesis 10 alone has five times more geographical data than the entire Koran. The minutiae of Genesis can be examined to check the book's accuracy. Such a scrutiny will show Genesis 1-11 describes the real world; not myth, fable, or legend (cf. W. Kaiser, *The Old Testament Documents*, 82).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 337 (1997) admits that certain parts of Genesis may employ symbolism. But this admittance is no license for Neo-Modernism to impugn the book's historicity.

Fr. R. Bandas provides the faithful with sound guidance: "The historical character of Genesis is a consequence of

its inspiration. For the sacred writer meant to write history, and inspiration, therefore, guarantees the historical character of what he wrote. Secondly, some of the narratives of Genesis contain doctrinal facts which form a part of the dogmatic teaching of the New Testament and of the Church; for example: the fact of creation, the unity of the human race, man's original innocence, and the fall; we have, therefore, infallible assurance that those events really occurred. Finally, other facts, as the story of the flood and of the patriarchs, are accepted as historical verities in the New Testament, have been so regarded by the Fathers, and are recognized as such by the ordinary teaching authority of the Church" (*Biblical Questions: The Old Testament*, 40-41).



## 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).

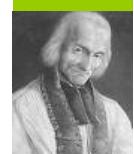
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The St. Jerome Biblical Guild is an educational apostolate that explains and defends Sacred Scripture; via Tradition and the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. The apostolate takes its name from St. Jerome, "The Father of Biblical Studies," and labors 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 Guild places itself under the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary. As well, the Guild seeks the intercession of St. Jean-Marie Vianney and 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, founder and director of the St. Jerome Biblical Guild, served two tours in the U.S. Marine Corps and is now employed 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 other 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 Catechetical Directory*; a former board member for a private Catholic school; a past columnist for the *Arlington Catholic Herald*; and a contributor to *The Latin Mass: The Journal of Catholic Culture and Tradition*. Mr. Ciresi resides with his wife and children in VA.



## Book Recommendation: *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters*

Donald K. McKim, ed., *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007) 1086 pp + indices. \$38.50.

The inquirer who steps into the vast field of Scripture Studies will discover a large number of men who have influenced, for good or for ill, the reading and interpretation of God's Word. The influence has come from exegetes, theologians, historians, and philosophers. A rudimentary knowledge of such individuals is necessary. The *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters* is a fine starting point.

Six "historical essays" begin the volume, covering Biblical interpretation in the following epochs: the early Church, the Middle Ages, the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, the Eighteenth and Nineteen Centuries, Europe in the

Twentieth Century, and North America in the Twentieth Century. The latter article was sampled, and found to be a solid overview for that period.

After the essays, one finds entries for over 200 significant personages; from the Patristic age to contemporary times. Each interpreter is usually covered under headings such as context, life and work, interpretive principles, and significance. This is followed by a bibliography of the individual's main writings. The bibliographies are excellent sources for additional research.

A selection of articles, from across the board, were sampled in their entirety. This included Catholic scholars

from outside the United States: Joseph Bonsirven, Jacques Dupont, M. J. Lagrange, and Ceslas Spicq. Next sampled were the men associated with "Old" Princeton and Westminster Theological Seminary: O. T. Allis, J. Gresham Machen, and Charles Hodge. Two random articles examined were William M. Ramsay and Brevard Childs. All the articles were informative.

The contributors who penned the articles for the book are from various denominations (Catholics and non-Catholics); likewise, the scholars profiled. In such an endeavor, one will find certain weaknesses. But overall, the *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters* is a reference text that will be consulted time and time again.

