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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, and related Scriptural knowledge, in light of Tradition and the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

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



### From the Director: On God's Time

There is no shortage of biblical passages, in both Testaments, which encourage one to read, study, and meditate upon God's truth. Examples from the Old Testament (cf. Dt 6:7; Ps 19:14; Is 1:18), and from the New (cf. Mt 22:37; Col 3:1-3; Jas 3:13), are found easily. The Church Militant must take heed.

Now, consider the Twenty-First Century. Tally the amount of time each of us spends online either shopping, visiting news outlets/political sites, or watching videos. While there is a place for such activities done with prudence (per one's state in life or vocation), most of us have to admit to an inordinate amount of time given to such endeavors.

Compare such undertakings to our efforts at daily Bible reading; especially the four Gospels. Are we satisfied? Can we improve? Do we feel ashamed?

The Christian faithful have different abilities, temperaments, and needs. Whatever the case, all of us can spend at minimum five minutes per day reading the Gospels (as we fulfill our daily duties). The written records from Ss. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John deserve far more attention than dryer reviews, government scandal stories, or 1994 Stanley Cup Finals highlights. May we use God's gift of time, wisely.

Godspeed,  
Salvatore J. Ciresi, M.A.

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 and Exegesis from the Old Testament:

### 1 Chronicles 29:10-20

"Therefore David blessed the LORD in the presence of all the assembly; and David said: 'Blessed art thou, O LORD, the God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from thee, and thou rulest over all. In thy hand are power and might; and in thy hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. And now we thank thee, our God, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from thee, and of thy own have we given thee. For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as all our fathers were; our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no abiding. O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building thee a house for thy holy name comes from thy hand and is all thy own. I know, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness; in the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all these things, and now I have seen thy people, who are present here, offering freely and joyously to thee. O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep for ever such purposes and thoughts in the hearts of thy people, and direct their hearts toward thee. Grant to Solomon my son that with a whole heart he may keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, performing all, and that he may build the palace for which I have made provision.' Then David said to all the assembly, 'Bless the LORD your God.' And all the assembly blessed the LORD, the God of their fathers, and bowed their heads, and worshiped the LORD, and did obeisance to the king" (1 Chr 29:10-20).



A portion of 1 Chronicles focuses upon David's final words and passing (cf. 1 Chr 28:1—29:30). Therein one finds a striking prayer in 1 Chronicles 29:10-20. Here are two brief points on the invocation.

Firstly, one finds the supreme dominion of God undergirds David's prayer. Thus, 1 Chronicles 29:11 uses the following string of theologically significant terms: "greatness" (*hagg<sup>e</sup>dhullāh*) "power" (*w<sup>e</sup>hagg<sup>e</sup>vûrāh*) "glory" (*w<sup>e</sup>hattiph'ere<sup>h</sup>ereth*) "victory" (*w<sup>e</sup>hannētsach*) "majesty" (*w<sup>e</sup>hahôdh*).

Followed with other expressions such as "rulest" (*môshēl*), and also "power and might" (*kōach ûgh<sup>e</sup>vûrāh*), it is evident that God's authority instills confidence in David's petitions. God's dominion means His rights of both lordship and property; in virtue of His creating the world and of redeeming mankind (cf. L. Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, p. 47). The believer should have assurance, as did David, of the Heavenly King's complete governance of all affairs on earth.

Secondly, God's dominion points to His omniscience. 1 Chronicles 29:17's "triest the heart" (*bōchēn lēvāv*) is "examine our motives" per the *New Jerusalem Bible*. The second use of "heart" (*l<sup>e</sup>vāvī*) in 1 Chronicles 29:17; the "hearts" (*l<sup>e</sup>vav* and *l<sup>e</sup>vāvām*) of 1 Chronicles 29:18; and "heart" (*lēvāv*) in 1 Chronicles 29:19, all indicate the LORD knows the inner man. No thoughts escape notice.

One exegete comments about David's prayer: "It is an expression of wonder at the power of God and of joy in the fact that this power has been used by him on behalf of his people" (C. Mangan, *Old Testament Message 13: 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah*, p. 73).

## Scripture Memorization and Exegesis from the New Testament:

### Revelation 2:8-11

“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: ‘The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life. I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who conquers shall not be hurt by the second death’” (Rev 2:8-11).

Here is a simple outline for Revelation: I. Introduction (Rev 1:1-20); II. Messages to the Seven Churches (Rev 2:1—3:22); III. Things Which Shall Be (Rev 4:1—22:5); and IV. Epilogue (Rev 22:6-21). This is based on Harold Lindsell, ed., *Harper Study Bible*, pp. 1862-3.

The second part, Revelation 2:1—3:22, are letters to seven vicinities: Ephesus (Rev 2:1-7); Smyrna (Rev 2:8-11); Pergamum (Rev 2:12-17); Thyatira (Rev 2:18-29); Sardis (Rev 3:1-6); Philadelphia (Rev 3:7-13); and Laodicea (Rev 3:14-22). The dispatches have a nearly identical pattern: an address, a self presentation of Christ, a local church’s condition, exhortations, and a promise (cf. P. Williamson, *Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture: Revelation*, p. 58). This evokes an earlier covenant of God with Israel (via Ex 20 and Dt 28); with its blessings and curses, rewards and punishments (cf. L. Wenig, *The Challenge of the Apocalypse*, p. 38). This column will focus on the missive to the flock at Smyrna (Rev 2:8-11).



Smyrna’s population, at the time, has been estimated as high as 400,000. This city was known for its beauty and size; dubbed “The First of Asia.” It had no limits on growth, thrived agriculturally, and was a major wine producer. Visitors noted Smyrna’s two harbors, theater, stadium, aqueduct, and fine physical layout. The city’s typical polytheism surrounded the Christians of St. John’s apocalyptic treatise (cf. R. Worth, Jr., *The Seven Cities of the Apocalypse and Greco-Asian Culture*, pp. 69-105).

Three points on the dispatch. Firstly, the Christological truths. We read of His eternity: “the first and the last” (*ho protos kai ho eschatos*). We also read of His resurrection: “who died and came to life” (*hos egeneto nekros kai ezesen*). Mysteries that confirm Deity.

A second observation considers that the faithful in Smyrna know “tribulation” (*thlipsin*), “poverty” (*ptōcheian*), and “slander” (*blasphemian*). These believers will “suffer” (*paschein*) and go to “prison” (*phylakēn*); to eventually be “tested” (*peirasthēte*), perhaps unto “death” (*thanatou*). The Church Militant here knew, and will know again, trials.

Finally, the “crown of life” (*stephanon tēs zōēs*) is mentioned in James 1:12, with similar expressions outside the book of Revelation (cf. 2 Tim 4:8; 1 Pet 5:4). The Christian life is likened to a competition with a prize.

Fr. George Montague guides us: “As you read these letters, think of Jesus, the glorious Son of Man and Lord of history, addressing the Christian communities of today and yourself personally” (*The Apocalypse*, p. 54).

*Veritas Scripturae* 1.4 (2009), in this same column, gave a string of quotations on the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy, and its allied points, from a variety of books. The quotations were taken from works on the Bible, dogma, apologetics, and a catechism. The variety was intentional: to demonstrate that inerrancy spans the major disciplines of theology (i.e., the study of God). Here are additional quotations from a similar range of books.

A scholarly tome on Biblical studies: “The first, and perhaps best-grounded, position common to all Catholic scholars, is the natural sequel of the traditional views regarding the nature of inspiration, which have already been exposed. It is to the effect that *divine inspiration must extend to matters other than faith and morals*, because this is an obvious inference from the dogmatic formula: ‘The sacred books of both Testaments have God for their author.’ This view, which has also been generally inferred from the decree of Trent that ‘the sacred books *with all their parts*’ must be held as sacred and canonical, has the further support of the testimony of Our Lord and the New Testament writers, who regard indiscriminately as God’s Word, passages which have a bearing on faith and morals, and those that have not” (F. Gigot, *An Introduction to the Study of the Holy Scriptures* I:552-553).

A dogmatic theology textbook: “Sacred Scripture is ‘inspired,’ that is, ‘delivered and prompted by God.’ What is the explanation of this? Think of a teacher who wants his pupil to write a composition. First he tells his pupil, orally, what is to be the content of the composition. Then, while the child is writing down what he heard, in his own words, the teacher stands beside him and watches to see that every sentence is correct, that is, that every sentence actually contains and expresses what the teacher wants written down. In a somewhat sim-

“The Bible appears to be full of contradictions only if you approach it in the wrong way.”

ilar matter, the Holy Spirit has enlightened the writers of the Bible...” (M. Premm, *Dogmatic Theology for the Laity*, p. 25 [reformatted for clarity]).

An apologetics book: “The Bible appears to be full of contradictions only if you approach it in the wrong way. If you think it is supposed to be a listing of theological propositions, you won’t make heads or tails of it. If you think it is written in the literary forms you’re most familiar with, you’ll go astray in interpreting it. Your only safe bet is to read it with the mind of the Church, which affirms the Bible’s inerrancy. If you do that, you’ll see that it contains no fundamental contradictions because, being God’s inspired Word, its wholly true and can’t be anything else” (K. Keating, *What Catholics Really Believe — Setting the Record Straight*, pp. 37-38).

A catechism: “How are we certain that the writings of the prophets and the hagiographers are truly inspired by God? That the writings of the prophets and the hagiographers are truly inspired by God is assured us by many reasons of an internal and external nature. The reasons of an internal nature are: immunity from error, from contradiction and from fraud; in addition the perfect conformity to right reason and to history, their excellence in themselves and in effects. Of particular importance, and a basis of absolute certainty are the reasons of an external nature, that is, *miracles and prophecies*” (J. Alberione, *Catechism for Adults*, pp. 75-76 [bold type removed]).

This multiplicity of authors, with differing objectives in their compositions, nonetheless join together to offer insights for the doctrine of inerrancy and related matters. The quotations, rightfully so, are best read within their contexts: Gigot (pp. 541-559); Premm (pp. 19-28); Keating (pp. 34-44); and Alberione (pp. 73-80).

# The Church Fathers and Scripture:

## A Selected Bibliography

Fr. Otto Bardenhewer observes: “The teachings of the Fathers of the Church are among the original sources of Catholic doctrine” (*Patrology*, p. 4).

This is one reason *Veritas Scripturae* gives attention to the Fathers in every bulletin. The Patristic era, spanning the Apostolic age to the mid Eighth Century, has an inestimable value for today’s student of the Bible. Here is a selected bibliography.

### An overview

- Patrick Hamell, *Handbook of Patrology*.
- Herbert Musurillo, *The Fathers of the Primitive Church*.
- Claire Russell, *Glimpses of the Church Fathers*.

### Popular introductions

- Mike Aquilina, *The Fathers of the Church*.
- Pier Franco Beatrice, *Introduction to the Fathers of the Church*.
- Boniface Ramsey, *Beginning to Read the Fathers*.

### Scholarly textbooks

- Berthold Altaner, *Patrology*.
- Johannes Quasten, et al., *Patrology 1-4*.
- Joseph Tixeront, *A Handbook of Patrology*.

### Topical studies

- Jimmy Akin, *The Fathers Know Best* (reviewed in *Veritas Scripturae* 8, 2016).
- William Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers 1-3* (reviewed in *Veritas Scripturae* 1.4, 2009).
- John Willis, *The Teachings of the Church Fathers*.



### The Fathers and the Liturgical Year

- Adalbert Hamman, ed., *The Mass: Ancient Liturgies and Liturgical Texts*.
- D. G. Hubert, *Sundays and Festivals with the Fathers of the Church*.
- M. F. Toal, trans. and ed., *The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers I-IV*.

### The Fathers and Holy Scripture

- Jean Danielou, *From Shadows to Reality*.
- Michael Graves, *The Inspiration and Interpretation of Scripture*.
- Christopher Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers*.
- Bertrand de Margerie, *An Introduction to the History of Exegesis I-III*.
- Thomas Oden, gen. ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (29 vols.).
- Frank Sadowski, ed., *The Church Fathers on the Bible*.
- Manlio Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*.
- Robert Wilken, gen. ed., *The Church's Bible* (ongoing).

### Multi-volume collections

- John Behr, et al., *Popular Patristic Series* (ongoing).
- Thomas Halton, gen. ed., *Message of the Fathers of the Church* (22 vols.).
- Carol Harrison, ed., *The Early Church Fathers* (ongoing).
- Johannes Quasten, et al., *Ancient Christian Writers* (ongoing).
- Alexander Roberts, et al., *Ante-Nicene Fathers and Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (38 vols.).
- William Rusch, ed., *Sources of Early Christian Thought* (ongoing).
- Ludwig Schopp, et al., *The Fathers of the Church* (ongoing).

## St. Thomas Aquinas and Revelation:

### Commentary on 1 Timothy 4:1

First Timothy 4:1 states: "Now the Spirit manifestly saith, that in the last times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to spirits of error, and doctrines of devils" (*Douay-Rheims Bible*). In his wise remarks on this Pauline verse, St. Thomas Aquinas leads Christians in our day. The Angelic Doctor teaches:

"The last times refers to the final era, because we are the ones upon whom the final ages have descended. Yet in this world the later it is, the closer we are to the last day. And just as in the early Church, on account of its nearness to Christ and the recently instituted sacraments, faith was very fervent, so in the last days as compared to the days of the apostles, 'some shall depart from the faith,' because they are carnal, and error will abound: 'gather yourselves together that I may tell you the things that shall befall you in the last days' (Gen 49:1).

The causes of the defection is twofold: one on the part of the Devil, who seduces: 'but I fear lest as the serpent seduced Eve by his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted' (2 Cor 11:3). Therefore, he says, 'giving heed to spirits of error,' namely, to demons whose work is to lead men into error: 'he is a liar and the father thereof' (Jn 8:44); 'I will go forth and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets' (1 Ki 22:22). And he says, 'to spirits,' because the head Devil has many underlings.

But how will they give heed? Will they see him? No, but they will speak in them. Therefore, he mentions the second cause, namely, false doctrines.

According to a Gloss he calls false teachers devils; and deservedly. For just as good men are sometimes called angels, so evil men because of the degree of their wickedness are called demons: 'have not I chosen you twelve: and one of you is the Devil' (Jn 6:71).

On the part of those deceived, the cause is also twofold: one is their falsity; the other is the perversity of their conscience.

In regard to the first he says, 'of devils,' i.e., of men possessed by a Devil; 'of devils' I say, 'speaking lies': 'how long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies, and that prophesy the delusions of their own heart' (Jer 23:26).



And note that no one could deceive another with a simple lie, unless it was covered with the appearance of truth. And so, they never could succeed in deceiving unless they pretended to have a good intention, or put a cloak over their pretense or false authority: 'let no man deceive you with vain words' (Eph 5:6); 'having an appearance indeed of godliness, but denying the power thereof. Now these avoid' (2 Tim 3:5)."

St. Paul was concerned about true doctrine, and Aquinas, likewise.

The citation is taken from F. Larcher, et al., *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Commentary on the Letters of Saint Paul to the Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, pp. 292-293, nos. 138-140 (modified and reformatted slightly for readability).

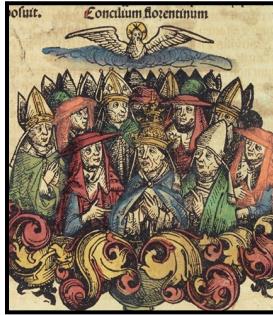
## The Magisterium Speaks:

### The Council of Florence on Holy Scripture

The seventeenth ecumenical council of the Catholic Church is known as the Council of Florence (1439-1445). In its *Decree for the Jacobites*, dated 1441 or 1442, the council declares that the Church, “most firmly believes, professes, and preaches that the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is the creator of all things, visible and invisible, who when He so willed, out of His bounty, made all creatures, spiritual as well as corporeal. They are good since they were made by Him who is the highest good, but they are mutable because they were made out of nothing. She asserts that there is no such thing as a nature of evil, because all nature, as nature, is good.

She professes that one and the same God is the author of the Old and the New Testament, that is, of the Law and the Prophets and of the Gospel; since the saints of both Testaments spoke under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, she accepts and venerates their books, whose titles are as follows:

Five of Moses, namely, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; Joshua, Judges, Ruth, four of Kings, two of Paralipomenon, Ezra, Nehemiah, Tobit, Judith, Esther, Job, Psalms of David, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Baruch, Ezekiel, Daniel; the twelve minor prophets, namely, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi; two books of the Maccabees; the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; fourteen letters of Paul, to the Romans, two to the Corinthians, to



the Galatians, to the Ephesians, to the Philippians, two to the Thessalonians, to the Colossians, two to Timothy, to Titus, to Philemon, to the Hebrews; two of Peter, three of John, one of James, one of Jude; *Acts of the Apostles; Apocalypse of John*” (R. Fastiggi, et al., *Heinrich Denzinger: Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, pp. 344-345 [modified slightly for clarity]).

Three interesting facts on the Council of Florence for biblical studies. The first is the statement on the two authors of Holy Writ. There is the Divine Author: “one and the same God is the author of the Old and the New Testament.” Then, the human authors: “the saints,” who “spoke under the inspiration (Lat., *inspirante*) of the same Holy Spirit.”

The second point: two general expressions to distinguish the Testaments. There is “the Law and the Prophets” (Lat., *Legis et Prophetarum*), and “the Gospel” (Lat., *Evangelii*). The council follows a pattern from Scripture by using a broad phrase to refer to the whole of the Old Testament (cf. 2 Macc 15:9; Mt 5:17; 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Lk 16:16; Jn 1:45; Acts 13:15; 28:23; Rom 3:21).

The third observation is the canon of Scripture. This is the first ecumenical council to list the books (true, catalogs had been given earlier at local synods or local councils). The Florentine listing employs some of the older book titles: “four of Kings” (i.e., 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings), “two of Paralipomenon” (i.e., 1 and 2 Chronicles), “Ecclesiasticus” (i.e., Sirach), and “Apocalypse” (i.e., Revelation).

## The Pontifical Biblical Commission:

### *On the Author, Time of Composition, and Historical Truth of the Gospels according to St. Mark and St. Luke*

“1. Whether the clear evidence of tradition, wonderfully harmonious from the earliest ages of the Church and supported by numerous arguments, viz., by the explicit testimonies of the Fathers and ecclesiastical writers, by the citations and allusions occurring in their writings, by the usage of the ancient heretics, by the versions of the books of the New Testament, by the most ancient and almost universal manuscript codices, and also by intrinsic arguments from the text itself of the sacred books, certainly compels us to affirm that Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, and Luke, a physician, the assistant and companion of Paul, are really the authors of the Gospels which are respectively attributed to them.

Answer: In the affirmative.

2. Whether the reasons, by which some critics endeavor to prove that the last twelve verses of the Gospel of Mark (16:9-20) were not written by Mark himself but added by another hand, are of a kind to justify the statement that that these verses are not to be received as inspired and canonical, or at least prove that Mark is not the author of said verses.

Answer: In the negative to both parts.

3. Whether likewise it is lawful to doubt of the inspiration and canonicity of the narrations of Luke on the infancy of Christ (chapters 1-2) or on the apparition of the Angel comforting Jesus and on the bloody sweat (22:43-44); or whether at least it can be shown by solid reasons — as ancient heretics used to think and certain more recent critics hold — that these narrations do not belong to the genuine Gospel of Luke.

Answer: In the negative to both parts.

4. Whether those very rare and altogether singular documents in which the Canticle *Magnificat* is attributed not to the Blessed Virgin Mary, but to Elizabeth, can and should at all prevail against the harmonious testimony of nearly all the codices both of the original Greek text and of the versions, as well as against the interpretation clearly required no less by the context than by the mind of the Virgin herself and constant tradition of the Church.

Answer: In the negative.

5. Whether, with regard to the chronological order of the Gospels, it is lawful to abandon the opinion, supported as it is by the most ancient as well as constant testimony of tradition, which testifies that, after Matthew, who first of all wrote his Gospel in his native language, Mark wrote second and Luke third; or is this opinion to be regarded as opposed to that which asserts that the second and third Gos-

pels were composed before the Greek version of the first Gospel.

Answer: In the negative to both parts.

6. Whether it is lawful to set the date of the composition of the Gospels of Mark and Luke as late as the destruction of the city of Jerusalem; or whether, from the fact that in Luke the prophecy of our Lord concerning the overthrow of this city seems to be more definite, it can at least be held that his Gospel was written after the siege had been begun.

Answer: In the negative to both parts.



7. Whether it is to be affirmed that the Gospel of Luke preceded the book of the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1:1-2); and since this book, of which the same Luke is author, was finished at the end of the Roman imprisonment of the Apostle (Acts 28:30-31), his Gospel was composed not after this date.

Answer: In the affirmative.

8. Whether, in view both of the testimony of tradition and of internal arguments, with regard to the sources which both Evangelists used in writing their Gospels, the opinion can prudently be called in question which holds that Mark wrote according to the preaching of Peter and Luke according to the preaching of Paul, and which at the same time asserts that these Evangelists had at their disposal other trustworthy sources, either oral or already written.

Answer: In the negative.

9. Whether the sayings and doings which are accurately and almost graphically narrated by Mark, according to the preaching of Peter, and are most faithfully set forth by Luke, having diligently learned all things from the beginning from eminently trustworthy witnesses, viz., ‘who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word’ (Lk 1:2-3), have a just claim to the full historical credence which the Church has ever given them; or whether, on the contrary, the sayings and doings are to be regarded as devoid of historical truth at least in part, either because the writers were not eyewitnesses, or because in both Evangelists lack of order and discrepancy in the succession of facts are not infrequently found, or because, since they came and wrote later, they must necessarily have related conceptions foreign to the mind of Christ and the Apostles, or facts more or less infected by popular imagination, or, finally because they indulged in preconceived dogmatic ideas, each according to the scope he had in view.

Answer: In the affirmative to the first part; in the negative to the second.

June 26, 1912”

## Addressing Bible Difficulties:

### The Cures of the Blind at Jericho

Matthew 20:29-34 states:

"And as they went out of Jericho, a great crowd followed Him. And behold, two blind men sitting by the roadside, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, 'Have mercy on us, Son of David! The crowd rebuked them, telling them to be silent; but they cried out the more, 'Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!' And Jesus stopped and called them, saying, 'What do you want me to do for you?' They said to Him, 'Lord, let our eyes be opened.' And Jesus in pity touched their eyes, and immediately they received their sight and followed Him."

Mark 10:46-52 teaches:

"And they came to Jericho; and as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent; but he cried out all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' And Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him.' And they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Take heart; rise, He is calling you.' And throwing off his mantle he sprang up and came to Jesus. And Jesus said to him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' And the blind man said to Him, 'Master, let me receive my sight.' And Jesus said to him, 'Go your way; your faith has made you well.' And immediately he received his sight and followed Him on the way."

Luke 18:35-43 declares:

"As He drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging; and hearing a multitude going by, he inquired what this meant. They told him, 'Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.' And he cried, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent; but he cried out all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' And Jesus stopped, and commanded him to be brought to Him; and when he came near, He asked him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' He said, 'Lord, let me receive my sight.' And Jesus said to him, 'Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.' And immediately he received his sight and followed Him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God."

Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; and Luke 18:35-43 are separate accounts of the same episode (cf. S. Hartdegen, *A Chronological Harmony of the Gospels*, pp. 132-133 and C. Tresmontant, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 488). There are two challenges to this scene. Firstly, how many were healed? Secondly, where does this miraculous action take place in relation to Jericho?

Consider the first difficulty. Matthew 20:30 speaks of "two blind men" (*dyo typhloī*). However, Mark 10:46 mentions only "Bartimaeus, a blind beggar" (*Bartimaios typhlos prosaitēs*) and Luke 18:35 simply, "a blind man" (*typhlos tis*). This intricacy is easy to unravel: "Matthew says there were two, and where there are two there is always one, every time! Matthew earlier mentions two demoniacs where Mark and Luke mention one (Matt. 8:28-34), so Matthew again mentions the two blind men where Mark mentions just one" (N. Geisler and T. Howe, *When Critics Ask*, p. 352).



Now, the second complexity. Matthew 20:29 has they (Savior and the Twelve) "went out of Jericho" (*ekporeuomenōn autōn apo lērichō*), and likewise Mark 10:46, "He was leaving Jericho" (*ekporeuomenou autou apo lērichō*), and then healings follow. However, Luke 18:35 has "He drew near to Jericho" (*tō engizein auton eis lērichō*) and then healings took place. The problem of where the cures happened, either departing Jericho or during its approach, may be answered from geography: there was more than one Jericho at the time of the Master. The older city, the Old Testament Jericho, is today at a site called Tell es-Sultan. Nearby is New Testament Jericho, called Tulul Abu el-Alayiq. The newer locale extended both south and west of the mound of ruins from the older city. A study tool notes: "Mark related the healing of Bartimaeus to Old Testament Jericho; thus the event occurred as Jesus was leaving that city and entering its New Testament counterpart. Luke, on the other hand, associated the incident with New Testament Jericho..." (W. Kaiser, et al., *NIV Archaeological Study Bible*, p. 1646; cf. C. Kopp, *The Holy Places of the Gospels*, pp. 256-261). A reasonable conclusion is that Ss. Matthew and Mark link to the earlier location, whereas St. Luke has in view the later setting.

## The Biblical World:

### The Hebrew Calendar

"The Hebrew calendar," states the *ESV Study Bible* (L. Dennis, exec. ed.), "was composed of 12 lunar months, each of which began when the thin crescent moon was first visible at sunset. They were composed of approximately 29/30 days and were built around the agricultural seasons. Apparently some of the names of the months were accommodated from Babylon following the time that the Israelites were exiled there" (p. 34). The following chart is based on the source above, and I. Jensen, *Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament*, pp. 110-111:

1st month sacred year ~ 7th month civil year:  
Abib (pre-Exile) or Nisan (post-Exile).  
Gregorian year = March-April.

2nd month sacred year ~ 8th month civil year:  
Ziv (pre-Exile) or Iyyar (post-Exile).  
Gregorian year = April-May.

3rd month sacred year ~ 9th month civil year:  
Sivan.  
Gregorian year = May-June.

4th month sacred year ~ 10th month civil year:  
Tammuz.  
Gregorian year = June-July.

5th month sacred year ~ 11th month civil year:  
Ab.  
Gregorian year = July-August.

6th month sacred year ~ 12th month civil year:  
Elul.  
Gregorian year = August-September.

7th month sacred year ~ 1st month civil year:  
Ethanim (pre-Exile) or Tishri (post-Exile).  
Gregorian year = September-October.

8th month sacred year ~ 2nd month civil year:  
Bul (pre-Exile) or Marchesvan (post-Exile).  
Gregorian year = October-November.



9th month sacred year ~ 3rd month civil year: Chislev.  
Gregorian year = November-December.

10th month sacred year ~ 4th month civil year: Tebeth.  
Gregorian year = December-January.

11th month sacred year ~ 5th month civil year: Shebat.  
Gregorian year = January-February.

12th month sacred year ~ 6th month civil year: Adar.  
Gregorian year = February-March.

It is believed that the Jews followed a solar calendar for the year, but a lunar calendar for the months. This complicated the reckoning of dates. Thus, every two or three years, a month was added after Adar (February-March). The thirteenth month was called Second Adar or Veadar (cf. J. Kodell, *The Catholic Bible Study Handbook*, p. 182 and M. Seisenberger, *Practical Handbook for the Study of the Bible*, p. 140).

Days were divided into watches and hours, over 8 parts:

1st watch: sunset to 9 pm.  
2nd watch: 9 pm to midnight.  
3rd watch: midnight to 3 am.  
4th watch: 3 am to sunrise.  
1st hour: sunrise to 9 am.  
3rd hour: 9 am to noon.  
6th hour: noon to 3 pm.  
9th hour: 3 pm to sunset.  
(cf. *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts*, p. 40).

Fr. Roland de Vaux in *Ancient Israel*, pp. 179-193, gives more details. Note well:  
"A calendar is one of those essentials we all take for granted" (D. Alexander, et al., *Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible*, p. 110).

## The Life of Christ:

### The Temptations in the Wilderness

"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward He was hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' But He answered, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." ' Then the devil took Him to the holy city, and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, "He will give his angels charge of you," and "On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone." ' Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God." ' Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; and he said to Him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Begone, Satan! for it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve." ' Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him" (Mt 4:1-11).

Examining the temptations in the wilderness, Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13 give the details; Mark 1:12-13 discloses a summary. There is a differing order to the trials: the Matthean text appears chronological, as the Lukan account is logical or catechetical (cf. C. Lattey, et al., *The Westminster Version of the Sacred Scriptures: New Testament I:12*). The episode may occur in the desert region of the lower Jordan Valley (cf. D. A. Carson, et al., *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, p. 2076).

Ponder the clear references to the Evil One: called the "devil" (*diabolou* or *diabolos* [Mt 4:1, 5, 8, 11]), "tempter" (*peirazōn* [Mt 4:3]), or "Satan" (*satana* [Mt 4:10]). The adversary is no fable. Frs. G. Vann and P. Meagher say, in part: "the Scriptures always present him as a real being, a mighty spirit, a great intelligence, inflexibly given over to evil" (*The Devil: And How to Resist Him*, p. 39).



Now, consider the desert environment. This hostile terrain's "wild beasts" (*thēriōn*) mentioned in Mark 1:13 could have included eagles, vultures, foxes, and jackals. They are animals of prey, making the area unsafe (cf. P. Bernard, *The Mystery of Jesus I:18*). This "wilderness" (*erēmon*) from Matthew 4:1 is desolate, inimical to civilization. Here was the chosen retreat where the Savior would be "tempted" (*peirasthēnai*). This isolation, of pain and sorrow, exceeded a month (cf. H. Daniel-Rops, *Jesus and His Times I:176*).

Look at the three temptations in St. Matthew. The opening inducement appeals to the body. The next lure to presumption. The final enticement to false worship (cf. F. J. Sheed, *To Know Christ Jesus*, pp. 99-111). The Son of God's threefold rebuke of the devil with "it is written" (*gegraptai*), citing Deuteronomy 8:3; 6:16; and 6:13, testifies to this early biblical book's veracity. This is a divine witness to the lasting value of the writings of Moses.

Here is a final observation for exegesis. Commentators have highlighted the parallels between the testing of Israel in the Old Testament and the testing of Christ in the New Testament. Both face a trial as a son of God (Dt 8:2-5; Mt 4:3, 6). Both pass through the waters before heading to the wilderness (Ex 14:21-29 and 15:22; Mt 3:16 and 4:1). Both are led by the Spirit (Ex 13:21; Mt 4:1). Both have stays in the desert connected to forty days and/or years (Dt 8:2; Mt 4:2). Both have a sequence of ordeals concerning hunger, loyalty, and worship (Ex 16:3; 17:7; 32:1-6; Mt 4:2, 7, 10). The parallels show that Christ recapitulates the trials of the exodus — Israel fails, while He succeeds (cf. C. Mitch and E. Sri, *Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture: The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 77).

Fr. Maurice Meschler, in his outstanding work of theology and devotion, instructs us from the Savior's example: "Our lives must be spent in the practice of prayer, penance and combat. He has undergone all these, and that is our comfort..." (*The Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ I:179*).

## Book Recommendation (out-of-print):

*The Book of Exodus:*

*A Study of the Second Book of Moses with Translation and Concise Commentary*

Henry J. Grimmelsman. *The Book of Exodus: A Study of the Second Book of Moses with Translation and Concise Commentary*. Norwood: The Seminary Book Store, 1927, 232 pages + index.

Fr. Grimmelsman released this work while a professor of Old Testament at Mt. St. Mary Seminary of the West (Cincinnati, OH). He declares: “*Exodus excels in historical importance. It recounts the origins of Israel both national and religious. The Second Book of the Bible — We’elleh Shemoth as the Jews called it — contains the first pages of the history of the Kingdom of God upon earth, founded as a nation apart and dedicated to the service of a Divine King; destined to keep alive faith in the true God and in His promises of salvation; preordained to prepare a home and a throne for the Messiah King and to give that Christ, His Redemption and His Rule to the world*” (p. iii [italics added]).

The headings “The Moses of Exodus” and “Moses as a Type of Christ” (pp. ix-xiii) introduce the man. “The Theology of Exodus” and “The Purpose of Exodus” (pp. xiv-xvi) cast light upon doctrine. “Analysis of the Contents” (pp. xvi-xix) is a convenient summary of Exodus’ forty chapters. This is followed by a helpful, although dated, bibliographical list (pp. xx-xxiii). The author’s forward, and these ancillary parts, are a primer to his biblical exposition.

For the core of *The Book of Exodus*, Grimmelsman produces an English translation that may be read alongside the popular renderings. Then, below his text, half or more of each page is a commentary of an historical, theological, and devotional kind. The exegesis intertwines all three aspects in places.



Here is a sample, pertaining to Exodus 12:5-8 and Passover: “*The unleavened bread and the command to remove all leaven remind him who partakes of the true Paschal Lamb, to take his place at the Eucharistic Banquet with a heart pure and sincere, free from the leaven of wickedness and every sin (1 Cor. 5, 7-8). Bitter herbs were eaten at the Pascal Supper. They tell man that the bitterness of penance and the sufferings of this life make the eating of His Sacred Flesh the sweeter*” (p. 81). One more extract, for Exodus 38:24-31 and gifts for the wilderness sanctuary: “*In Israel coins of gold and silver were not stamped until after the Exile. Perhaps rings of these metals were used at the time of Moses. The greatness of the sums given is not surprising when it is recalled that the patriarchs were rich in precious metals (Gn. 13, 2; 23, 15-16; 24, 35; 43, 21-22), that Israel had long been prosperous in Egypt before its oppression began, and had obtained many gifts when leaving for the Sinai*” (p. 224).

This scholar motivates us to read: “*The second book of the Bible purposes to tell how God delivered Israel from its bondage, brought it to Sinai, made a covenant with it, promulgated its laws, established its priesthood and set up its sanctuary. Unlike Genesis which deals rather with individuals as bearers of the promises, and is a series of eliminations, Exodus treats of a nation that henceforth is to be the custodian of revelation and the divinely instituted means to prepare the way for the coming of the Savior*” (p. xvi).

*The Book of Exodus*, nearly a century old, needs supplementation. The text’s every opinion need not be accepted. All the same, the work is interesting and useful.

## Book Recommendation (in-print):

### *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*

Gleason L. Archer. *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982, 434 pages, with bibliography and indices.

The Holy Bible is not always easy to read and comprehend. This is palpable to the beginner and to the trained scholar. The fact is that God's Word, inspired and inerrant, nonetheless contains alleged discrepancies and apparent contradictions. They are not real errors — but they are problems that one must try to answer. One response comes from Dr. Gleason L. Archer's *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*.

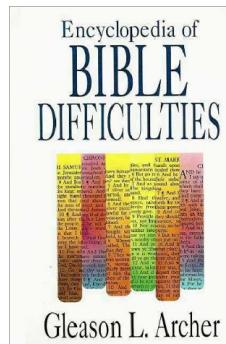
Archer (1916-2004) was a renowned biblical scholar in Protestant circles. He made lasting contributions to academia with works such as *Jerome's Commentary on Daniel*; *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament*; and *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. All three are valuable additions to one's library, but the *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* may be Archer's finest piece of scholarship.

*Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* offers solutions to the vexing questions that arise in both Testaments. Starting with Genesis and ending on Revelation, Archer gives answers to verses most prone to be charged with "errors." He replies to the challenges on textual grounds, matters of history, and points of theology. A guest forward by Dr. Kenneth S. Kantzer says of Archer: "His book will be a rich gold mine for those who hold to the inerrancy of Scripture and who need help in seeking to bring that conviction into harmony both with what they read in the Bible and the facts of the empirical world about them" (pp. 9-10).

The chapter "Recommended Procedures in Dealing with Bible Difficulties" contains wise counsel (pp. 15-17). Archer gives eight main paragraphs of guidance; here are some highlights: (1) Have confidence that the Divine Author preserved the human authors from errors or mistakes in the original manuscripts. (2) If unable to understand God's ways or words, then exercise humility and be patient until clarification arrives. (3) For problem verses, study the context, framework, entire book, or rest of Scripture on the same subject. (4) Discover what the biblical authors meant by their words;

in light of usage and their own conditions. (5) In cases of parallel passages, harmonization is the only justified method. (6) Most problems are addressed in reliable commentaries, dictionaries, and encyclopedias. (7) Many difficulties result from copyist errors. (8) The Bible itself is an archaeological document of the highest quality.

Within "Introduction: The Importance of Biblical Inerrancy," Archer points out some absurdities of an errant Bible (pp. 19-20), Christ's view of the Old Testament (pp. 21-22), the necessity of an inerrant Scripture and related matters (pp. 22-32), and an examination of textual criticism (pp. 32-44). This is an informative section.



The bulk of the tome examines difficulties from specific passages in God's Word. Here is one excerpt (which intersects with the book review on Grimmelmann from this issue of *Veritas Scripturae*): "How could Moses be said to have given Hoshea the name Joshua in Numbers 13:16 when he has already been referred to as "Joshua" in Exodus 17:9 and 24:13? There is no difficulty here, for the final composition of Exodus by Moses undoubtedly occurred toward the end of the forty years' wandering. Even though Joshua may not have acquired the name from Moses until later in the journey from Egypt to Canaan, nevertheless in retrospect it would have been only natural to refer to Joshua by the name he bore at the time Exodus was composed by Moses. It should be added that *Y<sup>e</sup>hōšū'* ('Jehovah is salvation') is virtually the same name as *Hōšē'* ('salvation'), both being derived from the root *yāšā'*" (p. 137 [reformatted for clarity]).

Archer also addresses connected matters such as the authorship for the five books of Moses (pp. 45-54), the unity of Isaiah (pp. 263-266), and the dating of Daniel (pp. 282-284). These supplemental discussions are a complement to the topic of biblical inerrancy.

There are many books of this kind available today; Archer's is one of the best. Of course, one will disagree with him in some sections. Nonetheless, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* is an outstanding source for those who want to increase their erudition of the Sacred Page.

**A.M.D.G.****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 study 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) defend the Magisterial doctrines of Biblical inspiration and inerrancy; the latter the main focus of the apostolate. The Guild is consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and Sacred Heart of Jesus. 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).

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