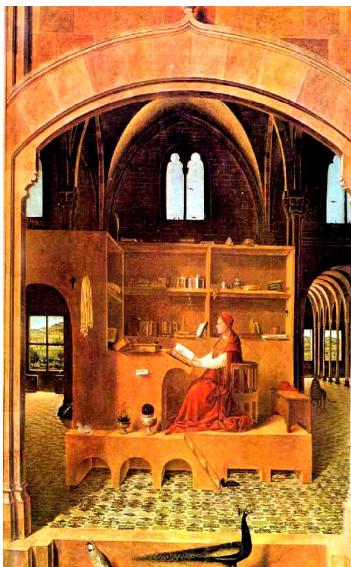


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# Veritas Scripturae

## 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: Catholic Biblical Scholarship, Today

The thrice holy God, in His mercy and goodness, sends us graces in the midst of our crosses. The crisis (really crises) within the Catholic Church, and the world at this time, is (are) lightened by the availability of outstanding books for those who desire to study the Holy Scriptures. Today's works are usually far better than those published in the 1960s through the 1980s (there are some exceptions). Some raise concerns about tomes even before 1960.

Consider some fine works today. Loreto Publications is translating the commentaries of Fr. Cornelius a Lapide; one of the great exegetes in the history of the Church. The Aquinas Institute is translating the commentaries of St. Thomas Aquinas, whose works on the Bible are finally getting proper recognition after many centuries of neglect.

Ignatius Press is releasing the commentaries of Dr. Scott Hahn and his associates for the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible* series (the New Testament is completed, and the Old in progress); they are the best commentaries in print, in my opinion. Baker Academic (an Evangelical operation) is publishing the *Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture* (the New Testament is done, the Old in work); a reliable and edifying set.

Catholic audio and video sources online are another area to consider. This current bulletin will follow up *Veritas Scripturae* 14 (2013) and offer more recommendations. Truly, God is benevolent to the students of His Word.

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:

### 2 Kings 2:1-15

"Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. And Elijah said to Elisha, 'Tarry here, I pray you; for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel.' But Elisha said, 'As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.' So they went down to Bethel. And the sons of the prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, 'Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?' And he said, 'Yes, I know it; hold your peace.' Elijah said to him, 'Elisha, tarry here, I pray you; for the LORD has sent me to Jericho.' But he said, 'As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.' So they came to Jericho. The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, 'Do you know that today the LORD will take away your master from over you?' And he answered, 'Yes, I know it; hold your peace.'

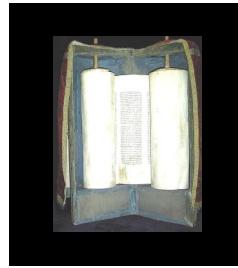
Then Elijah said to him, 'Tarry here, I pray you; for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.' But he said, 'As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.' So the two of them went on. Fifty men of the sons of the prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. Then Elijah took his mantle, and rolled it up, and struck the water, and the water was parted to the one side and to the other, till the two of them could go over on dry ground.

When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, 'Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you.' And Elisha said, 'I pray you, let me inherit a double share of your spirit.' And he said, 'You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if you do not see me, it shall not be so.' And as they still went on and talked, behold, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it and he cried, 'My father, my father!

the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!' And he saw him no more.

Then he took hold of his own clothes and rent them in two pieces. And he took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, saying, 'Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?' And when he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other; and Elisha went over.

Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho saw him over against them, they said, 'The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.' And they came to meet him, and bowed to the ground before him" (2 Ki 2:1-15).



"The Translation of Elijah" is the climax of his prophetic office. This non-writing seer ministered in the Ninth Century B.C. to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. 2 Kings 2:1-15 has three points of interest for Apologetics.

Firstly, note the term "father" (‘āvî) in verse 12. The title signifies hierarchical authority. Such designations are a common biblical refrain (Gen 17:4; Is 51:2; Lk 16:24; Jn 7:22; Acts 7:2; Rom 4:1; 1 Cor 4:15).

Secondly, observe the assumption in verse 11: "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (wayya‘al ‘ēliyāhû bas‘ārāh hashshāmāyim). This episode, in view of the similar, earlier miracle of Enoch (Gen 5:24), lends support for the later privilege of the Assumption granted to the Blessed Virgin Mary (Rev 11:19-12:6).

Thirdly, the "mantle" of verses 8 ('eth-‘addartô), 13 ('eth-‘addereth), and 14 ('eth-‘addereth) is a type of sacramental. It ushers in the miraculous parting of the waters by Elijah and Elisha (vv. 8 and 14). This is evidence that God makes use of material things to convey His graces and favors.

## Scripture Memorization and Exegesis from the New Testament:

### Philemon 1-3

"Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philemon 1-3).

The opening verses from the book of Philemon may be designated the "salutation." This kind of introduction is found in nearly all the Pauline writings. Look at the beginning verses from his remaining letters:

Romans 1:1-7: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, the gospel concerning His Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of His name among all the nations, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ; To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Corinthians 1:1-3: "Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes, To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

2 Corinthians 1:1-2: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother. To the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Galatians 1:1-5: "Paul an apostle — not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead — and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father; to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Ephesians 1:1-2: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Philippians 1:1-2: "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Colossians 1:1-2: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father."

1 Thessalonians 1:1: "Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace."

2 Thessalonians 1:1-2: "Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Timothy 1:1-2: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord."

2 Timothy 1:1-2: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life which is in Christ Jesus, To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord."

Titus 1:1-4: "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who never lies, promised ages ago and at the proper time manifested in His word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by command of God our Savior; To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior."



Hebrews 1:1-4 (Pauline in substance per the 1914 response of the Biblical Commission) will be examined in a future column. Below are a few general observations on the salutations.

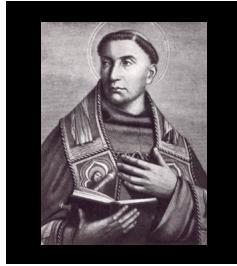
St. Paul asserts his episcopal authority as an "apostle" (*apostolos*); yet humbly as a "servant" or "slave" (*doulos*) of Christ. As well, Paul was frequently in the presence of his fellow workers (e.g., Sosthenes, Timothy, Silvanus) as he composed his writings. Finally, the Apostle was quick to console his audiences with assurances from God of His "grace" (*charis*) and "peace" (*eirēnē*) and "mercy" (*eleos*).

"In finding an apt use for passages of the Bible, in bringing together a multitude of texts that illustrate a point, St. Bonaventure shows remarkable command of Scripture and fertility of thought. No matter what his topic, he was endlessly imaginative in making a Scriptural mosaic to illustrate his point," notes Fr. Christopher Rengers in *The 33 Doctors of the Church*, page 346. Here, then, is a brief look at Bonaventure.

St. Bonaventure (c. 1221—1274) is called the "Seraphic Doctor." His writings justify this title via his theology, exegesis, oratory, ascetics, and philosophy. Bonaventure was also a genuine mystic. One renowned work of his, *The Breviloquium*, written about 1257, is filled with perennial wisdom and practical guidance for the student of Holy Scripture. The prologue from his work deserves to be read in its entirety. Two brief extracts from it will suffice for now. They will instruct and edify the defender of inspiration and inerrancy.

St. Bonaventure, in *The Breviloquium* 1.4, teaches: "Holy Scripture, then, is like an immense river: the farther it flows, the greater it grows by the addition of many waters. Scripture first consisted only of the legal books. Later, the waters of wisdom of the historical books were added to it; then followed the teachings of Solomon most wise; then, those of the holy prophets; and at last the Gospel teachings, spoken by the lips of Christ incarnate, set down in writing by the evangelists, related by the holy apostles. And when there were added the revelations which the Spirit, descending upon them, taught us through their means, the apostles, thus instructed in 'all the truth' by the Spirit, according to God's promise, could teach the Church of Christ the whole truth of salvation, and, by completing Holy Scripture, extend the knowledge of truth" (J. de Vinck, trans., *The Works of Bonaventure* II:8; reformatted for clarity).

Two points from the opening extract. First, St. Bonaventure anticipates a popularly accepted division of the books of the Old Testament. He names "the legal books" and "the historical books" (i.e., History); "the teachings of Solomon" (i.e., Wisdom); and "the holy prophets" (i.e., Prophets). Bonaventure's classification for the New Testament is much simpler: "writing by the evangelists" (i.e., the Gospels) and "added the revelations" (i.e., the remainder of the New Covenant books). Second, and even more important, is that the extract gives testimony to the coherence of the entirety of Sacred History (i.e., Salvation History). This fact is seen in the Seraphic Doctor's image of the "immense river" with "many waters" — a description of the unity of both Testaments.



St. Bonaventure continues further in *The Breviloquium* 5.4: "No passage of Scripture, then, should be regarded as valueless, rejected as false, or repudiated as evil, for its all-perfect Author, the Holy Spirit, could inspire nothing untrue, trivial, or degraded. That is why 'heaven and earth will pass away,' but the words of Scripture 'will not pass away' until they are fulfilled. For, in the Saviour's words, 'till heaven and earth pass away, not one jot or one tittle shall be lost from the Law till all things have been accomplished. Therefore whoever does away with any Scriptural doctrine, 'and so teaches men, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever carries them out and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven'" (De Vinck II:17-18; reformatted for clarity). The Seraphic Doctor explains that the Scriptures contains nothing "valueless" (i.e., no useless verses); nothing to be "rejected as false" (i.e., no scorned information); and nothing "repudiated as evil" (i.e., disavowed as malevolent). This is the case because the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity "could inspire nothing untrue, trivial, or degraded."

## The Church Fathers and Scripture:

### The Value of the Old Testament

"Throughout the whole patristic age, as indeed in all subsequent Christian centuries, the Old Testament was accepted as the word of God, the unimpeachable sourcebook of saving doctrine" says Dr. J.N.D. Kelly in *Early Christian Doctrines*, page 53. Earlier, he stated, in part: "The books comprising what later became known as the New Testament were, of course, already in existence" (p. 52). The main point, for now, is the place of the Old Testament during the period of the Church Fathers.

This is an important matter. The Patristic testimonies offer much evidence about the great value of the inspired and inerrant books from the dispensation before the Incarnation. This column, for now, will consider three Doctors of the Church from the Patristic epoch: St. Cyril of Jerusalem (A.D. 315—386), St. Jerome (A.D. 343—420), and St. Augustine (A.D. 354—430). The three are typical representatives of both the East (Cyril) and the West (Jerome and Augustine). There is no shortage in the Fathers on this topic; either in their praise or frequent use of the Old Testament.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem leads off:

"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.' Learn also diligently, and from the Church, what are the books of the Old Testament, and what those of the New" (*Catechetical Lectures* 4.33; A.D. 350).

St. Jerome continues:

"When I read the Gospel and find there testimonies from the Law and from the Prophets, I see only Christ; I so see Moses and the Prophets and I understand them of Christ. Then when I come to the splendor of Christ Himself, and when I gaze at that glorious sunlight, I care not to look at the lamplight. For what light can a lamp give when lit in the daytime? If the sun shines out, the lamplight does not show. So, too, when Christ is present the Law and the Prophets do not show. Not that I would detract from the Law and the Prophets; rather do I praise them in that they show forth Christ. But I so read the Law and the Prophets as not to abide in them but from them to pass to Christ" (*Treatise on the Gospel of Mark* 9:1-7; date uncertain).



St. Augustine closes:

"I call to witness, Honoratus, my conscience, and God who has His dwelling in pure souls, that I account nothing more prudent, chaste, and religious, than are all those Scriptures, which under the name of the Old Testament the Catholic Church retains" (*On the Profit of Believing* 13; A.D. 391—392).

Consider the quotations. Cyril explains the Old Testament is a custodian that leads us to the Savior, who fulfills and completes these very writings. Jerome teaches us to praise the Old Testament, and never to diminish it as a pathway towards Christ. Augustine describes the Old Testament as sensible, pure, and devout.

Fr. Boniface Ramsey says: "Understanding how the Fathers read and used Scripture is probably the best approach to understanding them at all. There are few patristic writings that are not thick with biblical quotations and allusions" (*Beginning to Read the Fathers*, p. 19). Keeping such an axiom in mind, let us follow the Fathers in their appreciation of the Old Testament.

## St. Thomas Aquinas and Revelation:

### Exegesis on Philippians 2:12-13

Philippians 2:12-13 in the *Douay Rheims Bible* (1899) states: "Wherefore, my dearly beloved (as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but much more now in my absence), with fear and trembling work out your salvation. For it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will." The *Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition* (1965, 1966) is a complement: "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation in fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (both translations reformatted for clarity).

That is a cherished pericope from St. Paul. Aquinas, in part, comments on the Apostle: "He recalls their obedience to show its relevance to good works, because every virtue is included under obedience. For a man is just inasmuch as he keeps God's commandments: 'Do you not know that if you yield yourself to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?' (Rom. 6:16). Furthermore, every good work, no matter how good it is of itself, is made better by obedience; ['The obedient man shall speak of victories' (Prov. 21:28)]. Finally, obedience is one of the greatest of the virtues: for to offer something from one's external things is great; to offer something from the body is greater; but the greatest is to offer something from your soul and will: and this is done by obedience: 'To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams' (1 Sam. 15:22). If you have acted thus, I urge you to continue doing the same." Thomas follows Paul by linking obedience to good works. The two are never separated for the Christian. God's commands are not optional; adherence to His truths are required for eternal life.



The Common Doctor continues on Paul: "Then when he says, *for God is at work in you, both to will and to work*, he strengthens their confidence, and he excludes four false opinions:

The first is the opinion of those who believe that man can be saved by his own free will without God's help. Against this he says: *For God is at work in you, both to will and to work*: 'The Father who dwells in me does his works' (Jn. 14:10); 'Apart from me you can do nothing' (Jn. 15:5).

The second are those who deny free will altogether and say that man is necessitated by fate or by divine providence. He excludes this when he says, *in you*, because He moves the will from within to act well: 'Thou has wrought for us all our works' (Is. 26:12).

The third, like the first, is that of the Pelagians who say that choices are in us, but the performing of works in God, because willing comes from us, but accomplishing comes from God. He excludes this when he says, *both to will and to work*: 'It depends not upon man's will,' i.e., without God's help, 'or exertion, but upon God's mercy' (Rom. 9:16).

The fourth is the opinion that God accomplishes every good in us and does this through our merits. He excludes this when he says [*according to*] *for his good pleasure*, and not our merits, because before we get God's grace there is no good merit in us: 'Do good to Zion in thy good pleasure' (Ps. 51:18)." The Angelic Doctor is quick to point out the necessary role of grace for the believer. Thomas dispels the error that the Christian somehow saves himself apart from the divine assistance. Really, everything is a grace.

The citations have been taken from Frs. F. Larcher and M. Duffy, *Aquinas Scripture Series, Volume 3: Commentary on Saint Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians and the Letter to the Philippians*, pages 86-88 (reformatted for clarity).

## The Magisterium Speaks:

### Vatican II's *Dei Verbum* 11: The Second Paragraph and its Footnotes, Part II

This is the next column for Vatican II's *Dei Verbum* (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, 1965). The focus is still upon Number 11. Recall the goal: a realistic view of the strengths and weaknesses of the document.

We continue to examine the 9 references of [footnote 5](#) for *Dei Verbum* 11's second paragraph. The first two references (from St. Augustine) were covered last bulletin.

The remaining references:

- St. Thomas Aquinas' *Truth*, question 12, article 2, C.
- Council of Trent's *Decree on the Canonical Scriptures*, session IV, paragraph 1.
- Pope Leo XIII's *Providentissimus Deus* II, D, 2b; 2c; 3-3a; 3b.
- Pope Pius XII's *Divino Afflante Spiritu* 3.

Some reminders. Firstly, the footnotes must be taken into account to interpret *Dei Verbum* 11 properly. Secondly, it is lamentable that the full quotations were not inserted directly into the paragraph.

Here is the next footnote, from St. Thomas Aquinas' *Truth*, question 12, article 2, C. A fuller reference is listed in Dr. Robert Fastiggi, et al., *Heinrich Denzinger: Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, page 923. It reads: "[De veritate](#), q. 12, a. 2, resp. (Editio Leonina 22/II:371b-372b)."

This is more detailed than what is listed in most editions (e.g., Flannery or Abbott) of the documents of the Second Vatican Council. Here is the full reference:

"In all things which exist for the sake of an end the matter is determined according to the exigency of the end, as is clear in the *Physics*. But the gift of prophecy is given for the use of the Church, as is clear in the first Epistle to the Corinthians (12:7): 'And the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man unto profit.' The letter adds many examples among which prophecy is numbered. Therefore, all those things the knowledge of which can be useful for salvation are the matter of prophecy, whether they are past, or future, or even eternal, or necessary, or contingent. But those things which cannot pertain to salvation are outside the matter of prophecy. Hence, Augustine says: 'Although

our authors knew what shape heaven is, [the spirit] wants to speak through them only that which is useful for salvation.' And to the Gospel of St. John (16:13), 'But when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will teach you all truth,' the Gloss adds: 'necessary for salvation.'

Moreover, I say necessary for salvation, whether they are necessary for instruction in the faith or for the formation of morals. But many things which are proved in the sciences can be useful for this, as, for instance, that our understanding is incorruptible, and also those things which when considered in creatures lead to admiration of the divine wisdom and power. Hence, we find that mention of these is made in Holy Scripture.

However, we should bear in mind that, since prophecy is knowledge of things which are far away, it does not have the same relation to all the things we have mentioned. For some things are far from our knowledge because of the things themselves and some are such because of something in us.



Future contingents are beyond us because of the things themselves, for they are unknown because they lack existence, since they neither exist in themselves nor are determined in their causes. But the things beyond us because of something in us are those which we have difficulty knowing because of our own inadequacy and not because of the things themselves, since they are the most knowable and the most perfect beings, such as things which are intelligible by nature, and especially things which are eternal.

Now, what belongs to a thing in itself belongs to it more truly than that which belongs to it by reason of something else. Hence, since future contingents are more truly beyond our knowledge than anything else, they seem, therefore, to belong especially to prophecy. And they pertain to it so much that, in the definition of prophecy, they are given as the special matter of prophecy. Thus: 'Prophecy is a divine inspiration which announces the outcomes of things with immutable truth.' And even the name of prophecy seems to be taken from this. Thus, Gregory says: 'Prophecy is so called because it predicts the future. When it speaks of the present or the past, it loses the character of its name.'

Now, among those things which are beyond us because of something in us there is likewise a difference which we must consider. For some things are beyond us because they surpass all human knowledge, as that God is three and one, and other such things. These are not conclusions of the sciences.

Some things, however, are beyond us because they surpass the knowledge of some men, but not human knowledge simply. In this class there are those things which the educated know through demonstration, but which the uneducated do not grasp with natural knowledge, although they are sometimes elevated to them by divine revelation. These things do not belong to prophecy simply, but with reference to men of this type. Thus, conclusions which are demonstrated in the sciences can belong to prophecy."

# The Pontifical Biblical Commission:

## *Sancta Mater Ecclesia* (The Historicity of the Gospels), Part I

This “Instruction” was issued April 12, 1964. At the time, the Biblical Commission was an organ of the Holy Office. The Commission, later to be reconstituted in 1971 to an advisory committee, issues its last authoritative pronouncement:

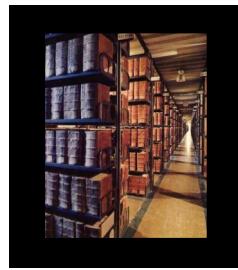
“Holy Mother Church, ‘the pillar and mainstay of the truth,’<sup>1</sup> has always utilized Sacred Scripture in her task of saving souls, and preserved it from erroneous interpretations. There will never be a lack of problems in explaining God’s Word and trying to solve vexing difficulties, so the Catholic exegete should not lose heart. Rather he should strive diligently to clarify the true meaning of Scripture, relying on his own forces and, most of all, on God’s help and the Church’s guiding light.

### Progress in Catholic Exegesis

It is a source of great joy that today many loyal sons of the Church are expert in biblical studies, as the times demand. Complying with the exhortations of the Supreme Pontiffs, they devote themselves unstintingly to this serious and arduous task. ‘All the children of the Church are reminded to judge the efforts of these industrious workers in the Lord’s vineyard with absolute fairness and great charity.’<sup>2</sup> For even such illustrious commentators as St. Jerome sometimes had relatively little success in explaining more difficult questions.<sup>3</sup> Care must be taken ‘that the heated atmosphere of dispute does not overstep the bounds of mutual charity; that such disputes do not give the impression that divine truths and sacred Traditions are being called into question. If the spirit of harmony and full respect for principles does not exist, we cannot expect much progress in this field from the varied studies undertaken by many different people.’<sup>4</sup>

### Exegesis Important Today

The work of exegetes is all the more necessary today because many writings in circulation question the truth of the events and sayings reported in the Gospels. Hence the Pontifical Biblical Commission, in order to carry out the task entrusted to it by the Supreme Pontiffs, deems it advisable to set forth and to stress the following points.



### I. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE EXEGETE

The Catholic exegete, under the guidance of the Church, should take advantage of all the contributions made by earlier commentators, by the Fathers and Doctors of the Church in particular, and carry on their work. In order to shed full light on the perennial truth and authority of the Gospels, he will adhere to the norms of scholarly, Catholic hermeneutics; and he will make appropriate use of the new exegetical techniques, particularly those advocated by the historical method taken as a whole.

#### The Historical Method

This method thoroughly investigates the sources, and analyzes their nature and value, relying, on the help of textual criticism, literary criticism, and linguistic knowledge.

The commentator will pay heed to the insistent admonition of Pius XII. ‘Let him prudently examine what the manner of expression or the literary genre used by the sacred writer contributes to a true and accurate interpretation; and let him rest assured that this aspect of his work cannot be neglected without grave detriment to Catholic exegesis.’<sup>5</sup> Pius XII’s admonition lays down a general principle of hermeneutics, valid for the interpretation of both the Old and New Testament, because the sacred writers used the patterns of thought and expression native to their contemporaries.

In short the exegete will use any and every means which will enable him to acquire a deeper insight into the nature of the gospel testimony the religious life of the early churches, and the meaning and value of the apostolic tradition.”

1. 1 Tim. 3:15.

2. *Divino afflante Spiritu* 47 (Enchiridion Biblicum [EB] 564).

3. Cf. *Spiritus Paraclitus* II.3 (EB 451).

4. Apostolic Letter *Vigilantiae* 8 (EB 143).

5. *Divino afflante Spiritu* 38 (EB 560).

Text and footnotes (both reformatted with modern numbering) will be continued in Part II.

## Addressing Bible Difficulties:

### More Online Sources

A past article, “Online Sources” (cf. *Veritas Scripturæ* 14, p. 9 [2022]), mentioned the value of audio and video resources online, and suggested some websites. Here are additional resources. To repeat from last time: this article is not exhaustive, and a number of helpful resources will be omitted (because of space limitations and/or my ignorance). Here are three sites of interest.

*The Philosophical Catholic* is the website of Dr. Matthew K. Miner. He explains: “We all have many identities, arranged in a kind of hierarchy. For my part, I am a Ruthenian Catholic, raised Roman Catholic in a mixed American-Slavic and Appalachian cultural context in Southwestern PA, a husband and father, a seminary professor, a translator. This website is meant merely to function as a kind of ‘extended business card’ to make my work more centrally available for those who are interested.” Miner is a trusted Catholic philosopher who teaches with clarity, and historical depth, in his lectures. His interviews, as well, are illuminative and opportunities for acquiring wisdom. Note well: many of the errors in our day, at root, are traceable to defective philosophy. The Catholic who desire to be an orthodox scholar, whatever his academic discipline, does well to have a sound philosophical foundation. Miner’s teachings will strengthen this foundation. He also offers much needed clarity on the controversies surrounding the *Nouvelle Théologie* that began around the 1940s (problems that linger in our own time). Please visit <https://matthewminer.com>.

*Keep The Faith* states on their website, in part: “you will find the priceless treasures of the Catholic faith and Catholic worship preserved and accessible to all — 24 hours a day, seven days a week, from anywhere in the world. The traditional teaching of the Church on faith and morals, the indispensable Latin liturgical tradition, the ‘right reason’ of Catholic philosophy, the

Church’s vital prescriptions for true social justice, the lives of the saints, Catholic history, Catholic Marriage, the Message of Fatima — these and many other subjects pertaining to the Faith are presented here for you to know and share with others.”

The podcasts of *Keep The Faith* are taken from their older recordings, and also from more recent conferences connected with their publication, *The Latin Mass: The Journal and Catholic Culture and Tradition* (which kindly carried several of my articles on Holy Scripture some years ago). The podcast offers a range of topics for the student of the Bible. Especially useful are the many talks about the Modernist crisis. Please visit <https://keepthefaith.org>.



The *Apocrypha Apocalypse* channel asks: “Why are Catholic and Orthodox Bibles bigger than Protestant bibles? Authors Gary Michuta, William Albrecht, and David Szaraz explore different aspects of the development of the Old Testament canon and whether the Deuterocanon is Apocrypha.” The platform address an important topic that does not get much attention in our day in Catholic biblical scholarship: the canon of Holy Scripture. There remains an inexcusable dearth in books on this subject in Catholic circles (Michuta has begun to remedy the problem via *Why Catholic Bibles are Bigger* [2017] and *The Case for the Deuterocanon* [2015]). The videos here cover a wide range of areas pertinent to the canon. There are materials on Jesus and the Old Testament, Josephus and the canon, the Fathers and the Bible, analyses of Protestant scholarship on God’s Word, debates about the canon, and lectures on Biblical inerrancy. One may view over 200 videos (best done in chronological order) and receive a solid education. Please visit [www.youtube.com/@ApocryphaApocalypse](https://www.youtube.com/@ApocryphaApocalypse).

More online sources will be recommended in future articles.

This column space has given attention to Biblical chronology in the Old Testament (e.g., *Veritas Scripturae* 2.1; 2.2; 2.3; 2.4; 3.2; 5; 14). This is a complex subject for anyone who studies the ancient world. An invaluable source is the book of Ezekiel.

The prophet Ezekiel gave us 48 chapters. At the risk of oversimplifying a long and intricate book, here is a modest outline:

- Ezekiel commissioned... 1:1—3:27.
- Judah judged... 4:1—24:27.
- The Gentiles judged... 25:1—32:32.
- Israel restored... 33:1—48:35.

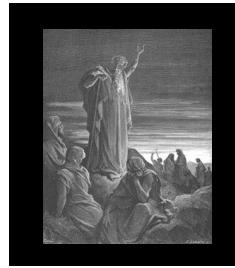
That is based on *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts*, pages 221-223. Detailed outlines are plentiful (cf. A. Cody, *Old Testament Message* 11:5-7; and D. Block, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Ezekiel* I:vii-x). Biblical chronology is significant in Ezekiel. Below are the pertinent verses, paired to dates:

Ezekiel 1:1-3: "In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. On the fifth day of the month (it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin), the word of the LORD came to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was upon him there." July 31, 593 B.C. ("thirtieth year" of v.1 is the prophet's age).

Ezekiel 8:1: "In the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I sat in my house, with the elders of Judah sitting before me, the hand of the Lord GOD fell there upon me." September 18, 592 B.C.

Ezekiel 20:1: "In the seventh year, in the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month, certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the LORD, and sat before me." August 14, 591 B.C.

Ezekiel 24:1: "In the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me." January 15, 588 B.C.



Ezekiel 26:1: "In the eleventh year, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me." February 3, 585 B.C.

Ezekiel 29:1: "In the tenth year, in the tenth month, on the twelfth day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me." January 7, 587 B.C.

Ezekiel 29:17: "In the twenty-seventh year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me." April 26, 571 B.C.

Ezekiel 30:20: "In the eleventh year, in the first month, on the seventh day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me." April 29, 587 B.C.

Ezekiel 31:1: "In the eleventh year, in the third month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me." June 21, 587 B.C.

Ezekiel 32:1: "In the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me." March 3, 585 B.C.

Ezekiel 32:17: "In the twelfth year, in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me." March 18, 585 B.C.

Ezekiel 33:21: "In the twelfth year of our exile, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month, a man who had escaped from Jerusalem came to me and said, 'the city has fallen.'" January 8, 585 B.C.

Ezekiel 40:1: "In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was conquered, on that very day, the hand of the LORD was upon me." April 28, 573 B.C.

Dates are not always in strict order, and sometimes approximate (cf. J. Bergsma, et al., *The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Book of Ezekiel*, pp. 13, 17, 24, 38, 46, 48, 52-6, 58, 66; and R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 845-846).

## The Life of Christ:

### A Preview to St. Luke's Gospel

"We cannot pattern ourselves on Christ unless we know him well. For such a knowledge there is no better source than the Gospel. Better than any secondhand image that we may get from sermons or spiritual books is the stark and simple picture of him presented by the four Evangelists" observes Fr. Leo Trese in *The Faith Explained*, page 563. This observation leads to another "preview" article on the Gospels. The focus now is St. Luke. Many of the resources will be employed again from the articles on Ss. Matthew and Mark.

St. Luke's Gospel consists of 24 chapters, 1,151 verses, and about 25,944 words (cf. R. Boyd, *World's Bible Handbook*, p. 411). This is the longest Gospel. It was written before A.D. 70, dedicated to an individual named Theophilus. The book eventually reached a mainly Gentile audience. St. Luke was not one of the Twelve Apostles, but was a close associate, designated an "apostolic man." Colossians 4:14 speaks of "Luke the beloved physician" (*Loukas ho iatros ho agapētos*), mentioned again in Philemon 24, as a companion of St. Paul at his first Roman imprisonment. 2 Timothy 4:11 shows St. Luke was with St. Paul later during his second captivity in Rome (the book of Acts, another composition from Luke, records his ties with Paul during his second mission trip and later travels in spreading the Good News in Acts 16:10-17; 20:5—21:18; 27:1—28:16). Tradition confirms Lukan authorship in the main testimonies from St. Irenaeus, *The Muratorian Fragment*, Tertullian, Origen, St. Augustine, and St. Jerome (citations are given in *Veritas Scripturae* 1.2; 1.4; 1.5; 1.6; 2.2; and 2.3). The Biblical Commission's *On the Author, Time of Composition and Historical Truth of the Gospels According to St. Mark and St. Luke* (1912) sets down a foundation for studying the Lukan chronicle (cf. A. Fuentes, *A Guide to the Bible*, pp. 181-186; A. Wikenhauser, *New Testament Introduction*, pp. 199-221).



Here is an outline for St. Luke's Gospel:

- The preface (Lk 1:1-4).
- The births and childhoods of John and Jesus (Lk 1:5—2:52).
- The ministry of John (Lk 3:1-20).
- The baptism and temptations of Jesus (Lk 3:21—4:13).
- Public ministry in Galilee (Lk 4:14—9:50).
- The journey to Jerusalem (Lk 9:51—19:27).
- The last week in Jerusalem (Lk 19:28—23:56).
- The resurrection, appearances, and the ascension (Lk 24:1-52).

A crucial portion of the Lukan record is the Savior's trek to Jerusalem, introduced via Luke 9:51: ["When the days drew near for Him to be received up, He set His face to go to Jerusalem."](#) Hymns abound with Our Lady's *Magnificat* (Lk 1:46-55), Zechariah's *Benedictus* (Lk 1:67-79), the angelic *Gloria* (Lk 2:13-14), and Simeon's *Nunc Dimittis* (Lk 2:28-32). There are the joined, threefold parables of mercy on the "Lost Sheep" (Lk 15:3-7), the "Lost Coin" (Lk 15:8-10), and the "Lost Son" (Lk 15:11-32). A key verse from the book is Luke 19:10: ["For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."](#)

A final point: St. Luke emphasizes that the Gospel is rooted in real history, with true sayings, among actual events per Luke 1:1-4 and 3:1-6. This concern for the facts classes him with the best of the ancient chroniclers, such as Thucydides (cf. F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents*, pp. 80-93). St. Luke is a trustworthy writer.

Additional sources consulted: Fr. Pablo Gadez's *Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture: The Gospel of Luke*, pages 15-27; Dr. Donald Guthrie's *New Testament Introduction*, pages 102-135; Dr. Harold Lindsell's *Harper Study Bible*, pages 1527-1528; and Msgr. John Steinmueller's *A Companion to Scripture Studies* III:85-105.

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

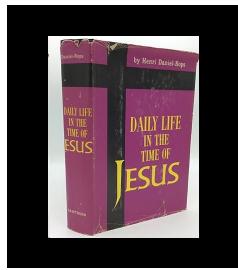
### *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus*

Henri Daniel-Rops. *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus*. Translated by Patrick O'Brian. New York: Hawthorn, 1962. 512 pages.

Henri Jules Charles Petiot (1901-1965), wrote under the pen name Henri Daniel-Rops. His numerous books (some still in print) include editorship of the 150-volume *Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Catholicism*; and individual works such as *St. Paul: Apostle of Nations*; *The Heroes of God*; *The Book of Mary*; and *Jesus and His Times* (an insightful life of Christ). A companion to the latter is *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus*. Here is a brief review.

Daniel-Rops aims to explain the epoch of the birth of Christianity. This is to say, he teaches us about the circumstances that surround the life of Jesus Christ, and the age which ushered in the establishment of the Catholic Church. This should interest every living member of the Mystical Body of Christ. Many desire to know their family roots and heritage. More so should the Catholic want to know the world and land of Palestine — the very setting where the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.

*Daily Life in the Time of Jesus* is a plethora of scholarship, in a single volume, focused on the people at the time when the Divine Savior was upon the earth. We learn of their land (they had a country, as does modern man). We read of their occupations (they had to work, as does modern man). We understand their homes (they had dwellings, as does modern man). We discover their foods (they had to eat, as does modern man). The book gives proper attention to the political, economic, scientific, and religious climate of the God-man. This throws great light upon the reading and study of the Four Gospels, and the New Testament as a whole. As well, the background of the Old Testament, essential for grasping the New Covenant period, is then seen with greater clarity.



Consider an extract on the ancient "job market": "The workshop of the carpenter, of the *nagger* — a workshop like Saint Joseph's, for example, at Nazareth — had to be equipped for all the kinds of work that would be ordered. One man would come to have the stilt or the coulter of his plough repaired; another would ask for a pergola to be set up along the side of his house; a woman might come to buy a chest or possibly a bushel to measure her wheat, another a kneading-trough, and still another a support for straw pallets; or a mason would come to order jambs and lintels for doors. What a variety of things! The tools were very much the same as those which our modern woodworkers use: axe, hatchet, saw, knives, adze (the *ascia* of the Romans, which the Christians made one of their secret symbols, meaning the Cross), plane, the square and the cramp: the hammer, of course, was well known, as well as nails, which were often made of bronze. The archeologists have turned up a good many of them. At an early date the drill had been introduced from Egypt: it was a bow-drill, turned with great rapidity. Clearly, then, the carpenter of Palestine was a man of parts: he was uncommonly useful, and he was very much esteemed" (p. 279). How many readers of the Holy Bible know such fascinating details on the occupations held by both St. Joseph and the Master? These features from the "Hidden Years" are absent from the Four Gospels.

There are two helpful chronological tables: Israel alongside the pagan nations, and Jesus and the Church alongside Rome and Palestine (pp. 498-500). The book has sparse footnotes (endnotes in the French original were excluded in the English translation). A later release (also out of print) was issued by Servant Books in 1980. This printing includes both the endnotes and a descriptive bibliography. *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus* may be available second-hand on [www.bookfinder.com](http://www.bookfinder.com).

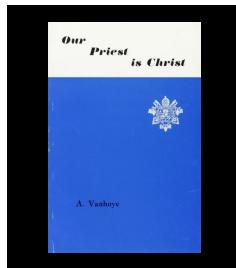
## Book Recommendation (in-print):

### *Our Priest is Christ: The Doctrine of the Epistle to the Hebrews*

Albert Vanhoye, S.J. *Our Priest is Christ: The Doctrine of the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Translated M. Innocentia Richards. Roma: P. I. B., 1977. 63 pages.

Fr. Albert Vanhoye, S.J., (1923-2021) was a renowned scholar and authority on the book of Hebrews. Later named a Cardinal, he was highly respected at the Pontifical Biblical Institute as professor, dean, and rector. Vanhoye's translated publications dedicated to Hebrews include *Subsidia Biblica 12: Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (1989); *Rhetorica Semitica: A Different Priest, The Epistle to the Hebrews* (2011); *The Letter to the Hebrews: A New Commentary* (2015); and *A Perfect Priest: Studies in the Letter to the Hebrews* (2018). There are other germane tomes as well. A booklet, smaller but no less valuable, is *Our Priest is Christ: The Doctrine of the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Here is a brief review.

Vanhoye provides an edifying anecdote: "Saint Isaac Jogues, the French Jesuit missionary in Canada, when a prisoner of the Iroquois, who, after having inflicted horrible tortures upon him, made him lead 'a life more cruel than any death', turned to Holy Scripture to fortify his endurance. He wrote: It was 'my only refuge in the sufferings heaped upon me; I revered it and wanted it with me when I would die. It happened that of all the books we had brought to use with the French living among the Hurons, the only one that fell into my hands was Saint Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews ... I always carried it with me.' In his most tragic moments, it was in the Epistle to the Hebrews that he drew strength of soul and unshakeable confidence in God for himself and his companions in suffering" (p. 54). Today, this inspired epistle on the New Covenant, in and by Jesus Christ, continues to console believers in their trials. This is one of many incentives to read, study, and pray with the book of Hebrews.



The booklet begins with the usual ancillary material for an examination of Hebrews: canonicity, authorship, literary style, date, audience, and other matters (pp. 5-8). The basics are covered briefly, but in a clear and thoughtful manner. Next is a beneficial overview with a simple schema, followed with a more detailed outline of the epistle (pp. 9-13). Vanhoye points to one of the main teachings in Hebrews: "By his sacrifice, Christ became the cause of salvation. He was proclaimed a priest, not in the manner of Jewish priests, but in a new way" (p. 9). As well: "Resemblances, differences, superiority; such are the three relationships that must be noted in regard to Christ's high-priesthood when compared with the ancient worship. It is in this manner that Christian fulfillment is defined" (p. 11).

The remainder of the booklet examines the thirteen chapters that comprise the book of Hebrews. Doctrine links to devotion: "The sacrifice Christ offered was for him the path to glory. It was a supreme act of obedience and love that involved his human nature, causing it to pass through death in order to be remade according to the will of God. This sacrifice terminated in the Resurrection and the Ascension. 'We see Jesus ... crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering and death' (2,9). 'Because he endured the cross, despising the shame, he is seated at the right hand of the throne of God' (12,2). His humanity possesses all the glory which he had as Son of the Father before the world was made (Jn 17,5.24). Therefore, the value of his sacrifice is evident" (p. 36). This kind of rich extract is typical throughout the work.

*Our Priest is Christ* will complement the great Catholic expositions on Hebrews from St. John Chrysostom and St. Thomas Aquinas. Vanhoye offers a compact but scholarly primer to a complex and detailed epistle from the New Testament.

**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 Guild is consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and Sacred Heart of Jesus. As well, the Guild seeks the intercession of St. Joseph, St. Jean-Marie Vianney, and St. Thérèse of Lisieux for favors and protection. In all things, this apostolate seeks the greater glory of God (per 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 in the U.S. Marine Corps and is now employed in the aviation sector. He earned a Masters Degree in Theological Studies, with a Scripture concentration, from the Notre Dame Graduate School of Christendom College, where he serves on the part-time faculty. His other ecclesiastical activities include (1) past co-host of 'Cross Talk,' a Catholic radio program in Virginia, (2) a contributor on behalf of the Arlington Diocese to the 2005 revision to the *National Catechetical Directory*, (3) a former board member for a private Catholic school, and (4) a writer for a variety of publications. Ciresi resides with his wife and children in Virginia.

