

Volume 2, Number 4

October – December
2010

Veritas Scripturae

The Bulletin of the St. Jerome Biblical Guild



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

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



From the Director... Wisdom from Orestes A. Brownson

The Nineteenth Century’s Orestes A. Brownson was one of the ablest defenders of the Catholic Faith in his day. His *Brownson’s Quarterly Review* covered an array of interesting topics. The October 1861 issue carried an article, “Reading and Study of the Scriptures,” which is very pertinent for our time.

Consider this extract (slightly edited): “The Church undoubtedly requires her children to read the Scriptures with a reverential spirit, since they contain the revealed word of God, and it is God Himself that is speaking through them. She also requires them to read the Holy Scriptures under her guidance, her direction, and not to interpret them in opposition to her teaching; because, as her teaching is from the Holy Ghost, by His assistance, and under His protection, any interpretation

of Scripture contradicting that teaching would necessarily be a false interpretation, since the Scriptures are also from the Holy Ghost. But this does not mean... we have not the free use of our own reason and understanding in reading them, and developing and applying their sense. It does not mean that the errors of transcribers and of translators may not be corrected, or that we may not use all the helps to be derived from history and criticism, from science or erudition in correcting them. It does not mean that we may not use profane science and literature, the researches of geographers, the facts brought to light by travelers and the students of natural history, in illustrating and settling the literal meaning of the sacred text” (H. Brownson, *The Works of Orestes A. Brownson* XX:180).

Brownson’s common sense conveys the following points: 1) we must manifest the proper reverence towards God’s word; 2) the Sacred Page is to be read with the supervision of Holy Mother Church; 3) such an approach does not stifle the scholarly pursuits of the Bible student; and 4) this method should make use of the aids derived from textual criticism, history, the sciences, and geography.

Consider the third and fourth points: this is an opportunity for “scholarship for the glory of God.” Brownson would say careful research, which takes no shortcuts and expends a real effort, could be placed at the service of truth. Today, the Catholic Church needs that kind of scholarship for the defense of the Scriptures.

Godspeed,
Salvatore J. Ciresi

www.stjeromebiblicalguild.org

Scripture Memorization & Exegesis: 2 Corinthians 10:3-5	2
Inerrancy Basics: “Mainstream” Inspiration	2
The Church Fathers & Scripture: St. John Chrysostom on the Value of Scriptural Minutiae	3
St. Thomas Aquinas & Revelation: Study Habits of the Common Doctor	3
The Magisterium Speaks: St. Pius X’s <i>Syllabus</i> and the Bible	4
The Pontifical Biblical Commission: The Response of 1907, Part I	4
Addressing Bible Difficulties: Old Testament Replication, Part III	5
The Biblical World: More Dates for the Book of Genesis	5
Book Recommendation: <i>The Study of Sacred Scripture</i>	6

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

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

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

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

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

Scripture Memorization & Exegesis: 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

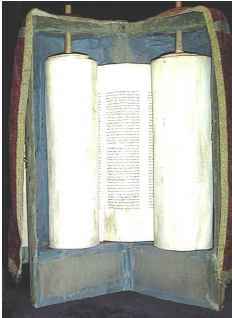
“For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Cor 10:3-5).

Two letters from St. Paul to Corinth are found in the New Testament. Because of some details within both books (1 Cor 5:9; 2 Cor 2:3-4), there is speculation on the amount of correspondence the Apostle ultimately directed to Corinth. However, this is a tangential issue. What is important is that the Pauline authorship of 1 and 2 Corinthians is not really disputed, and neither is their canonical status.

The background to both letters sheds light on their contents and tone. The capital city of Corinth was located in the Roman province of Achaia, within southern Greece. The city was situated between two seaports, and as a center of science and culture, was a site for interaction among Jews, Greeks, Romans, Syrians, and Egyptians. Corinth also held the Isthmian games every two years. The high point of the city, named the Acrocorinth, was the spot of a pagan temple to Aphrodite, said to house 1,000 “sacred prostitutes.” No wonder the expression “to act like a Corinthian” refers to immorality. This secularized setting was one reason for the letters to Corinth (cf. W. Most, *The Thought of St. Paul*, 69).

St. Paul addresses the Christian’s pilgrimage “in the world” or “in the flesh” (*en sarki*). This is our daily life in the body; our time on earth. But, the Apostle points out he did not employ worldly or fleshly means to spread the Gospel: only “divine power” (*dynata tō theō*). St. Anselm says the “weapons” (*hopla*) are zeal, preaching, wisdom, courtesy, holiness, miracles, prayer, pure intention, patience, and charity (cf. C. Lapidé, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 139). Modern evangelism should heed Anselm.

St. Paul’s militant language likens the Gospel to a battle (Eph 6:10-17; 1 Tim 1:18; 2 Tim 4:7). This is our intellectual warfare contra erroneous “arguments” (*logismous*) and every false “thought” (*noēma*).



Inerrancy Basics: “Mainstream” Inspiration

Fr. E. Kaiser’s *Sacred Doctrine: An Introduction to Theology* is a textbook from Newman Press published in 1958. The book is based on summer courses taught at St. Joseph’s College in Rensselaer, Indiana. The text typifies the instruction received from Catholic academia just over a generation ago. Keep this point in mind.

Kaiser writes on pages 105-106: “Our inquiry is concerned with the inclusiveness of inspiration within the inspired books themselves. Does inspiration extend to each and every statement or only to certain kinds of assertions?”

There have been writers who denied that inspiration extended to all parts of the sacred book, making a distinction between those due to human effort and those written under divine inspiration. Some confined inspira-

tion to matters purely doctrinal and the things bound up with doctrine necessarily. Others limited inspiration to matters of faith and morals, including only the supernatural doctrines found in the Bible....

All such limitations and restrictions of inspiration run counter to Catholic teaching. Sacred Scripture is inspired in all its parts: God is the author of each and every book and each part of the books.

Though the purpose of the Sacred Books is the salvation of souls through instruction in divinely revealed mysteries of faith, all the parts of the Bible conspire unto this end, and God as the author must be the true author of the entire Scriptures. Such is the Catholic doctrine, as found in countless statements of ecclesiastical authority. To cite but one: in the [1907] decree condemning

Modernism, Pius X expressly condemns the proposition that divine inspiration does not extend to the whole Scriptures in such wise that all the parts and each part are safeguarded against error. To this we add the [1915] decision of the Biblical Commission: Everything which the sacred writer asserts, enunciates, insinuates, must be held as asserted, enunciated, insinuated by the Holy Spirit. God is the author of the entire work.”

Kaiser then fittingly states: “The Church has always taught both in her ordinary magisterium and solemn pronouncement that the Sacred Scripture, as the very word of God, is free from error.”

The conclusion is unavoidable: all present day limits or restrictions to inerrancy are a rupture from the past.

“The Church has always taught both in her ordinary magisterium and solemn pronouncement that the Sacred Scripture, as the very word of God, is free from error.”

The Church Fathers & Scripture: St. John Chrysostom on the Value of Scriptural Minutiae

St. John Chrysostom (A.D. 347-407) is one of the four Great Doctors of the Church from the East. His title “gold mouth,” *Chrysostom*, reflects his outstanding preaching. Consider this citation: “Assuredly then, we ought not hastily to pass by even those sentences of Scripture which are thought to be plain; for these also have proceeded from the grace of the Spirit; but this grace is never small, nor mean, but great and admirable, and worthy the munificence of the Giver” (*Homilies Concerning the Statues* 1.2; A.D. 387). Or this quote: “Nothing is placed in the Holy Scriptures without a reason, for they were uttered by the Holy Spirit, therefore let us inquire exactly into every point” (*Homilies on the Gospel of John* 50.1; A.D. 391).

This eloquent Greek Father knew there is not a wasted sentence, or even word, in God’s inspired and inerrant Bible. Each line, and even each term for that matter, has some significance. Recall that the charism of Biblical inspiration applies to actual words.

Think of some of the individual Hebrew and Greek terms in Holy Writ that carry doctrinal weight, and in some cases not a little controversy. There is *bārā* (“created”) in Genesis 1:1; *almā* (“virgin”) in Isaiah 7:14; *petra* (“rock”) in Matthew 16:18; and *kecharitōmenē* (“full of grace”) in Luke 1:28. Many other examples abound. Even the plural or singular of a word has some significance: Galatians 3:16 loses all force if there is no difference between “offsprings” (*spermasin*) and “offspring” (*spermati*).

As well, consider the great amount of attention given to the translation of many terms. Is Genesis 3:15 rendered “she” and “her,” or “it” and “its,” or “he” and “his?” Should Romans 3:25 employ “expiation” or “propitiation?” Indeed, words are important.

We can apply Chrysostom’s citations to two areas. Firstly, we must know all 73 books of the Bible. If we read John, then we must read Philemon as well. If we read Jeremiah, then we must read Obadiah as well. Secondly, we should not pass over the portions of God’s word that might not appeal to us. The genealogy of Ezra 7:1-6 is as inspired as the genealogy of Luke 3:23-38. The lesson: every student of Scripture must treasure the entire Bible — all the books of both Testaments.



St. Thomas Aquinas & Revelation: Study Habits of the Common Doctor

Dr. Ralph McInerny, the late, great philosopher, left behind a small but handy book: *St. Thomas Aquinas*. Chapter 5, “The Tasks of Theology,” has the following opening lines: “Saint, priest, friar, theologian — it is impossible to think of Thomas Aquinas’s life as other than a long and constant meditation on the question he is said to have asked as a child, ‘What is God?’ Meditating on the Scriptures, reading the Fathers, returning again and again to theological accounts of the mysteries of faith, his writing and teaching an integral part of his spiritual life, his effort to become what God wished him to be — all the activities of his life coalesce and become his response to the divine vocation. If we think his style stark and almost shockingly matter-of-fact as he discusses the

Trinity, Incarnation, sacraments, and so forth, we may be reassured to learn that his study and writing were punctuated by pauses for prayer, tearful pleas for light” (127).

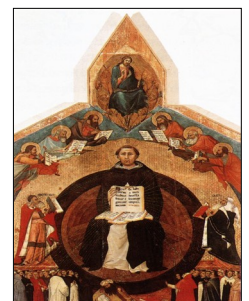
McInerny’s brief description of Thomas’ life lays out an ideal approach for all students of God’s word. Not wishing to be overly simplistic, let us consider four aspects.

There is the Angelic Doctor’s regular meditation upon the Scriptures. It is easy, today, with the massive amount of research tools at our disposal (e.g., lexicons, concordances, journal articles, commentaries, etc.), to become entrenched in “book work” while we neglect quiet reflection on God’s word. Of course, the best place for such reflection is in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Thomas knew the value of silence.

Next, the Common Doctor read the Church Fathers. One need only consult his *Catena Aurea*, his collection of mainly Patristic quotes on the Four Gospels, to discover Thomas had an appreciation of that crucial epoch of Church History. Today, the Fathers are getting attention even in non-Catholic publishing circles.

Further, Aquinas returned often to the treatises on the truths of the Faith. This shows a love for Tradition. Every Catholic, to some degree, is a “Traditionalist.”

Lastly, the Angelic Doctor’s place for prayer, and requests for graces to illumine his mind. If Thomas, one of the greatest minds ever, pleaded for divine help in his studies, then what does this mean for us? We likewise must beg for God’s assistance as we do research.



The Magisterium Speaks: St. Pius X's *Syllabus* and the Bible

Veritas Scripturae Vol. 1, No. 2, discussed Pope Pius IX's defense of the Bible in his *Syllabus* of 1864. Along such lines, Pope St. Pius X gave us a similar defense of the Bible in his own *Syllabus* of 1907. This papal document listed a number of propositions, to be condemned and proscribed, as dangerous for the field of Biblical studies. Below are several pertinent propositions; so clear that no commentary is necessary:

"They display excessive simplicity or ignorance who believe that God is really the author of the Sacred Scriptures" (No. 9).

"Divine inspiration does not extend to all of Sacred Scriptures so that it renders its parts, each and every one, free from every error" (No. 11).

"In many narrations the Evangelists recorded, not so much things that are true, as things which, even though false, they judged to be more profitable for their readers" (No. 14).

"Until the time the canon was defined and constituted, the Gospels were increased by additions and corrections. Therefore there remained in them only a faint and uncertain trace of the doctrine of Christ" (No. 15).

"The narrations of John are not properly history, but a mystical contemplation of the Gospel. The discourses contained in his Gospel are theological meditations, lacking historical truth concerning the mystery of salvation" (No. 16).

"The fourth Gospel exaggerated miracles not only in order that the extraordinary might

stand out but also in order that it might become more suitable for showing forth the work and glory of the Word Incarnate" (No. 17).

"John claims for himself the quality of witness concerning Christ. In reality, however, he is only a distinguished witness of the Christian life, or of the life of Christ in the Church at the close of the first century" (No. 18).

"The divinity of Jesus Christ is not proved from the Gospels. It is a dogma which the Christian conscience has derived from the notion of the Messias" (No. 27).

"Not everything which Paul narrates concerning the institution of the Eucharist (1 Cor. 11:23-25) is to be taken historically" (No. 45).



The Pontifical Biblical Commission: The Response of 1907, Part I

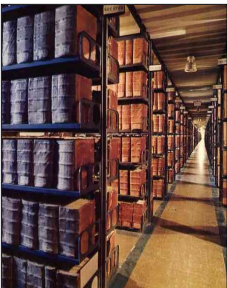
On the Author and Historical Truth of the Fourth Gospel (1907) is the first Commission response on the Evangelists. The 1907 document, in three parts, offers a defense of St. John's Gospel. The first two parts address authorship, and the last covers reliability. The first part says:

"The Biblical Commission answers the following questions:

1. External Evidence for Authenticity — Whether from the constant, universal, and solemn tradition of the Church coming down from the second century, as it is gathered chiefly: a. from the testimonies and allusions of the holy Fathers and ecclesiastical writers, nay even those of heretics, which since they must have been derived from the disciples or first successors of

the Apostles, are joined by a necessary connection to the very origin of the book; b. from the fact that the name of the author of the Fourth Gospel was received always and everywhere in the canons and catalogues of the sacred books; c. from the most ancient manuscripts, codices and their versions in various languages of the same books; d. from the public liturgical use obtaining throughout the whole world from the very beginnings of the Church; leaving aside the theological argument, it is proved by such a solid historical argument that the Apostle John and no other must be acknowledged as the author of the Fourth Gospel, that the reasons to the contrary, brought forward by the critics, in no wise weaken this tradition.
Answer: In the affirmative."

Four areas on authorship are given by the Commission; all rooted in Catholic Tradition. The first area is the witness of the Fathers. Past issues of *Veritas Scripturae* have cited St. Irenaeus, *The Muratorian Fragment*, Tertullian, Origen, St. Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, St. Augustine, and St. Jerome. The next area points us to the canonical lists that associate St. John with the Fourth Gospel. Some lists are from local Councils held in Laodicea (c. A.D. 360) and Rome (A.D. 382), or the Ecumenical Councils at Florence (1442), Trent (1546), and Vatican II (1965). The third area is the records, from ages past, in the diverse tongues. Such texts were in Greek, Latin, and other languages. The fourth area is the books used for Divine Worship: Missals and related texts.



Addressing Bible Difficulties: Old Testament Replication, Part III

This is our third and final look at the reconstruction of the Old Testament. We arrive at the Hebrew manuscripts, which possess an obvious worth for the study of the Old Testament. Our concern is what is called the Masoretic Text; usually abbreviated MT.

There was a line of Jewish scholars who were part of the process of preserving the Old Testament. The *Sopherim*, or “scribes,” were custodians of texts between the Fifth and Third Centuries B.C. The *Zugoth*, or “pairs” of scholars, spanned the Second to First Centuries B.C. The *Tannaim*, “repeaters” or “teachers,” worked to A.D. 200. This intersected the early Patristic age, which later gave us Origen (d. A.D. 254) and St. Jerome (d. A.D. 420); two churchmen who dealt with Hebrew texts.

This leads up to the famed Masoretic Text, named for its compilers: the Masoretes. These scholars operated from A.D. 500 to 950. Note the name: the Hebrew term *māsōrā* means “tradition.” The Masoretes added vowel points, and pronunciation marks, to a consonantal text that was passed down to them. The Masoretes, here, were codifying tradition.

Consider, now, the great care taken by the Masoretes to safeguard the Hebraic text. Msgr. J. Steinmueller writes: “The Massoretes, by placing the vowels, punctuation, and accentuation in the consonantal text rendered the Hebrew text immutable. In addition, they numbered the verses, words, and letters of every book, indicated what verse, word, and letter was in the

middle of the book, and noted the frequency of individual letters. Part of the material which they had collected was added at times to the Biblical MSS. When this was written on the upper or lower margins and spread out, it was called the *Massora marginalis magna*; when this was written next to the text and between the columns in a short and abbreviated form, it was called *Massora marginalis parva*. At other times these notes were collected in separate MSS. and kept distinct from the biblical text” (*A Companion to Scripture Studies* I:168).

There were two main schools of Masoretes: in the East, (linked to Babylonia), and in the West (tied to Tiberias of Palestine). Consult G. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 67-73.



The Biblical World: More Dates for the Book of Genesis

Attempts have been made to date Genesis 1—11. There is no completely satisfactory solution for this chronological period. Thus, the *Haydock Study Bible* (1992 reprint) has: “Absolute certainty in these matters cannot be obtained, as able chronologists vary...” and “we cannot decide with absolute certainty on many points of Chronology, before the Christian Æra.” Nonetheless, consider some of the efforts to date that early age.

The Roman Martyrology, in a 1955 Newman Press edition translated by R. Collins, offers the following chronology on page 296 (slightly adapted): “In the year, from the Creation of the world, when in the beginning God created heaven and earth, 5199; from the Flood, 2957; from the birth of Abraham, 2015...”

The *Haydock Study Bible*, which frequently follows J. Ussher’s *The Annals of the World*, gives this timeline on page 1227 (slightly adapted):
 4004: Creation
 4003: Cain and Abel born
 3875: Cain kills Abel
 3874: Seth born
 3769: Enosh born
 3679: Kenan born
 3609: Mahalalel born
 3544: Jared born
 3382: Enoch born
 3317: Methuselah born
 3130: Lamech born
 3017: Enoch’s translation
 2962: Seth dies
 2948: Noah born
 2864: Enosh dies
 2769: Kenan dies
 2714: Mahalalel dies
 2582: Jared dies
 2469: Noah warns of a flood
 2448: Shem born
 2353: Lamech dies
 2349: Methuselah dies

2349: The Flood
 2348: Noah exits the Ark
 2346: Arpachshad born
 2311: Shelah born
 2281: Eber born
 2247: Peleg born
 2217: Reu born
 2185: Serug born
 2155: Nahor born
 2126: Terah born
 1996: Abram born.

Across the theological divide, more opined dates appear for the Creation of the world and Adam: the Vatican Septuagint (5270), Fr. Cornelius a Lapide (3951), Melancthon (3964), Luther (3961), and Josephus (5555, 5481, 5402, or 4698). In view of all such labors, the Magisterium has yet to speak dogmatically on this matter (cf. R. Sungenis, *The CASB Series, Vol. IV: The Book of Genesis 1-11*, 370-387). More work needs to be done.



Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam

J. M. J.

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

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

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

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

www.stjeromebiblicalguild.org

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

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

+ + +

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



Book Recommendation: *The Study of Sacred Scripture*

The Study of Sacred Scripture (Boston: Daughters of St. Paul, n. d.) 71 pp.

Paul Cardinal Taguchi (d. 1978) wrote an article for the *Catholic Position Papers*, published in Japan, in 1974. The article was eventually published in America as a small book: *The Study of Sacred Scripture*. The work, to this day, remains one of the finest introductions to Biblical inspiration, inerrancy, and interpretation. This is the book to pass along, to any inquiring mind, who wants to know why the veracity of God's word is such a monumental doctrine for the Catholic Faith.

Taguchi was a faithful son of the Church from the "old school." He finished his studies in Rome in the 1930s, and later was appointed a seminary professor in Tokyo. And it shows: he pulls no punches as he defends God's word.

Part of the "Introduction" says: "The Church has always encouraged those who read and study the holy bible to approach it with the proper dispositions of faith and piety, reminding us time and again that it is the written word of God, given in safekeeping to the Church to be watched over, defended, and authentically explained.

And yet, over the years, there has been no shortage of opinions expressing an apparent ignorance of the divine character of sacred Scripture and of the duty of reverence and faith incumbent on those who read, study, or interpret it" (13-14). Those words, from nearly a generation ago, apply today.

His Eminence then lays out the Catholic Church's teaching on the Bible in four main parts. We have "Some Doctrinal

Aspects: Sacred Scripture, Tradition, Magisterium;" "Present-day Deviations;" "Origin of These Deviations;" and "How Scripture Should be Read, Studied and Explained."

One more extract: "The root causes of this new slant on sacred Scripture studies are to be found among those that underlie all of the present doctrinal confusion. Firstly, there is the influence that liberal evolutionist rationalism has had on theological thought; secondly, the sway of 'modern philosophy' based on subjective premises, which has penetrated various areas of thought, even in the field of theology" (53). Such trenchant analysis fills out the whole book.

The tome, out of print, may be found at www.bookfinder.com. Please pray for the repose of the soul of Cardinal Taguchi.

