

# 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... Reverence to the Sacred Page

St. John Vianney declared:  
“My children, why are people  
so blind and so ignorant?  
Because they make so little  
account of the Word of God.  
There are some who do not  
even say a *Pater* and an *Ave*  
to beg of the good God the  
grace to listen to it attentively,  
and to profit well by it. I be-  
lieve, my children, that a  
person who does not hear the  
Word of God as he ought, will  
not be saved; he will not know  
what to do to be saved....  
See, my children, the esteem  
in which Our Lord holds the  
Word of God; to the woman  
who cries, ‘Blessed is the  
womb that bore Thee, and the  
paps that gave Thee suck!’ He  
answers, ‘Yea, rather blessed  
are they who hear the Word of  
God and keep it!’ Our Lord,  
who is Truth itself, puts no  
less value on His Word than

on His Body. I do not know  
whether it is worse to have  
distractions during Mass than  
during the instructions; I see  
no difference. During Mass we  
lose the merits of the Death  
and Passion of Our Lord, and  
during the instructions we lose  
His Word, which is Himself.  
St. Augustine says that it is as  
bad as to take the chalice  
after the Consecration and to  
trample it underfoot” (*The Lit-  
tle Catechism of the Curé of  
Ars*, p. 18).

The perennial guidance from  
the famed Curé will equip us  
to battle any lethargy we may  
manifest toward the Sacred  
Page. St. John is calling out  
our inattention while attending  
the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass,  
and our laxity when undergo-  
ing any kind of instructions in  
the Catholic Faith.

No doubt, Sunday worship  
should be the highlight of the  
week for every Catholic. There  
is no better setting for hearing  
and meditating upon God’s  
Word. Most of the prayers in  
the *Roman Missal* are derived  
from the Scriptures. And it is  
in such a setting that we adore  
and receive the Body, Blood,  
Soul, and Divinity of the King  
of Kings. Revisit the Curé:  
“Our Lord, who is Truth itself,  
puts no less value on His  
Word than on His Body.”

What about the sermon? *In  
persona Christi*, the priest’s  
catechesis deserves our  
utmost concentration. Willful  
inattention to his preaching is  
akin to showing disrespect to  
the Lord Jesus Christ.

Godspeed,  
Salvatore J. Ciresi

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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: James 3:1

“Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness” (Jas 3:1).

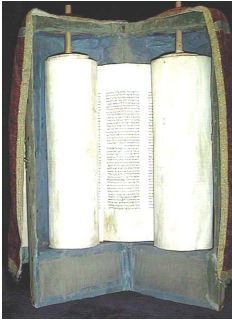
Significant warnings about false teachings, and their propagators, are divinely revealed as a lasting caveat. The Savior puts us on guard: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves” (Mt 7:15). St. Paul warns: “Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by giving heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons” (1 Tim 4:1). Hear St. Peter: “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive

heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Pet 2:1).

Alongside such cautions, the Bible fittingly discloses an emphasis on right doctrine. Orthodoxy is not an option for Catholics. St. John cries out: “Any one who goes ahead and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God; he who abides in the doctrine has both the Father and the Son” (2 Jn 9). St. Jude states: “Beloved, being very eager to write to you of our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Many similar and interrelated passages are found in the Old Testament (Dt 18:20; Prov 13:14; Jer 14:14).

In view of such a background, we return to James 3:1. “Teachers” (*didaskaloi*) are a reference to fellow Christians, called “brethren” (*adelphoi*). This passage is intended to give due pause to any believer who undertakes the weighty responsibility of instructing others. Such an action must be approached with prayer, humility, and sound research. The teacher of the Catholic Faith will render an account; for his own pedagogical works, and to some degree, for the actions of his followers (Acts 20:28; Heb 13:17).

No wonder the Bible stresses the use of language (Sir 5:13; Mt 12:36). This is highlighted in James 3:6; 4:16; and 5:9. Proper speech, then, applies to the high office of teacher (1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11).



### Inerrancy Basics: The Uniqueness of God’s Word

Msgr. Paul Glenn’s *Apologetics* makes the following contribution to the field of Biblical inerrancy: “The Bible contains statements of fact that men could not know by their unaided powers (as, for example, the order of creation, the fact of the Incarnation, etc.); it contains prophecies of things that no human or created knowing-power could foretell (as, for example, the coming of the Redeemer, at such a time, in such a place, in such a way); it contains authentic accounts of miracles in proof of the doctrine which it (the Bible) teaches. Now miracles and prophecies and the exhibition of knowledge beyond the power of created understanding, are certain indications of a work or a word that is of God. Therefore, the Bible is truly the word of God. Add to these considerations the amazing influence over minds and hearts that the Bible alone,

of all books in the world, has exercised for more than thirty centuries — since the Exodus from Egypt, in fact. No human document could conceivably have been to men what the Bible has been. The conclusion to which we are literally forced is that the Bible is not a mere human document. Hence, it is a document of divine origin. And, certainly, if it is divine, it is God’s true word” (pp. 293-294, italics in original).

In apologetic literature, one will often find some attention given to the veracity of the Scriptures. Such a defense will usually not appeal to the doctrine of divine inspiration. Instead, the apologist will offer proof of the Bible’s reliability as an historical document. Or, the apologist will discuss the reasonableness of holding to

a trustworthy book that claims to come from God. Glenn’s citation mentions two cognate areas: (1) the Bible and the supernatural, and (2) Holy Writ’s effect on mankind. We will focus on the latter.

The Sacred Page’s influence upon the world should not be dismissed, as if it were merely a subjective measure. This influence may be examined objectively. No other book has been translated so widely into other languages. No other book has been the object of so much academic scrutiny. No other book continues to sell so well, year after year, per commercial standards.

But those are generalities. Has any other book been the catalyst for so many conversions to the Catholic Church? Think of St. Augustine’s *Confessions* 8.12.28-30.

“The Bible contains statements of fact that men could not know by their unaided powers (as, for example, the order of creation, the fact of the Incarnation, etc.)...”

Msgr. P. Glenn

## The Church Fathers & Scripture: St. Basil on Scripture and Tradition

St. Basil of Caesarea (A.D. 330-379), along with his brother St. Gregory of Nyssa (A.D. 335-394) and friend St. Gregory of Nazianz (A.D. 330-389), is one of the renowned "Cappadocian Fathers." Basil is a Doctor of the Church, and was an orthodox influence for Trinitarian theology within the Fourth Century.

St. Basil offers a fine Patristic testimony to the authority of the Scriptures. His witness is quite typical of the devotion to Holy Writ within the epoch of the Fathers. Thus, St. Basil can declare with confidence: "Therefore, let God-inspired Scripture decide between us; and on whichever side be found doctrines in harmony with the word of God, in favor of that side will be cast the vote of truth" (*Letter* 189.3; A.D. 374/5).

However, one also has in this Cappadocian the necessary approbation given to Tradition: "Of the beliefs and practices whether generally accepted or publically enjoined which are preserved in the Church, some we possess derived from written teaching; others we have received delivered to us 'in a mystery' by the tradition of the apostles; and both of these in relation to true religion have the same force" (*On the Holy Spirit* 27.66; A.D. 375).

In the remainder of this tome above, St. Basil names some of those beliefs and practices. He speaks of the sign of the cross, facing East at prayer, and the epiclesis during the Holy Sacrifice. He mentions also the various aspects that accompany the sacrament of baptism: the blessing of the

waters, the blessing of the oils, the blessing for the catechumen, the anointing with oil, the triple immersion, and the renunciation of Satan and his angels.

The Cappadocian's high view of the Bible is praiseworthy. Equally so is his endorsement of Tradition. Similar endorsements are read in St. Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 3.3.2; A.D. 180-199), Tertullian (*The Demurrer Against the Heretics* 19.3; A.D. 200), St. Clement of Alexandria (*Miscellanies* 1.1; A.D. 207), Origen (*Fundamental Doctrines* pref. 2; A.D. 225), Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 4.21.1; A.D. 300-325), St. Jerome (*Dialogue Against the Luciferians* 8; A.D. 382), and St. John Chrysostom (*Homily Four on Second Thessalonians*; A.D. 398-404). Such references are only a sample.



## St. Thomas Aquinas & Revelation: The Privilege of St. John the Beloved

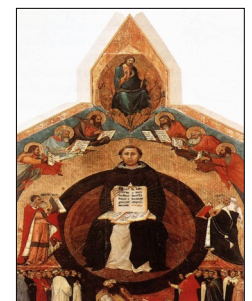
St. Thomas Aquinas' prologue to his commentary on the Fourth Gospel says, in part, that the Apostle is "symbolized by an eagle. The other three Evangelists, concerned with those things which Christ did in the flesh, are symbolized by animals which walk on the earth, namely, by a man, a bull calf, and a lion. But John flies like an eagle above the cloud of human weakness and looks upon the light of unchanging truth with the most lofty and firm eyes of the heart. And gazing on the very deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which he is equal to the Father, he has striven in this Gospel to confide this above all, to the extent that he believed was sufficient for all. Concerning this flight of John it says in Job (39:27): 'Will the eagle,' that is, John, 'fly up at your command?' And further

on it says, 'His eyes look far away,' because the Word of God is seen in the bosom of the Father by the eye of the mind. John is described as to privilege since, among the other disciples of the Lord, John was more loved by Christ. Without mentioning his own name John refers to himself below (21:20) as 'the disciple who Jesus loved.' And because secrets are revealed to friends, 'I have called you friends because everything I have heard from my father I have made known to you' (below 15:15), Jesus confided his secrets in a special way to that disciple who was specially loved. Thus it says in Job (36:32): 'From the savage,' that is, the proud, 'he hides his light,' that is, Christ hides the truth of his divinity, 'and shows his friend,' that is, John, 'that it

belongs to him,' since it is John who sees the light of the Incarnate Word more excellently and expresses it to us, saying, 'He was the true light' (below 1:19) (J. Weisheipl and F. Larcher, *Aquinas Scripture Series Vol. 4: Commentary on the Gospel of St. John* 1:27).

Here is an observation from the comments of the Angelic Doctor: St. John is the great teacher of the Deity of Jesus Christ. This revealed truth is implicit or explicit in every chapter (Jn 1:1; 2:11; 3:13; 4:42; 5:46; 6:40; 7:38; 8:58; 9:5; 10:30; 11:25; 12:45; 13:3; 14:11; 15:26; 16:15; 17:5; 18:37; 19:11; 20:21; 21:25).

Christ's divinity is disclosed by Ss. Matthew, Mark, and Luke. But John the Beloved teaches this dogma in a unique way. His Gospel is the essential one for the field of Christology.



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

Observations for *Verbum Domini* 19 (titled "Sacred Scripture, inspiration and truth") began with the first paragraph of this section. Here is the second paragraph: "As the Synod Fathers affirmed, the theme of inspiration is clearly decisive for an adequate approach to the Scriptures and their correct interpretation [cf. Synodal proposals 5 and 12], which for its part is to be done in the same Spirit in whom the sacred texts were written [cf. *Dei Verbum* 12]. Whenever our awareness of its inspiration grows weak, we risk reading Scripture as an object of historical curiosity and not as the work of the Holy Spirit in which we can hear the Lord himself speak and recognize his presence in history."



Two key themes are derived from the Holy Father in this second paragraph. Following the earlier paragraph, we see again an emphasis placed on the vital doctrine of inspiration. It is called "decisive," not only for proper hermeneutics, but even for one's initial contact with the Sacred Page. The Pope drives this point home: inattentiveness to this divine charism may reduce the Bible to nothing more than a piece of ancient literature. In other words, one must not handle the God-breathed Scriptures with the same methodology one applies to the uninspired *History* from Herodotus.

The classics are a treasure, but uninspired. The Bible is a treasure, as well as inspired and inerrant and salvific.

Here is the second theme. Benedict fittingly connects the charism of inspiration, and the science of interpretation, with the role of the Holy Ghost in the life of the believer. This relation between the Spirit and the Christian was mentioned a generation before Vatican II's *Dei Verbum* 12 (1965). Back in 1920, an earlier Benedict, Pope Benedict XV, refers us to St. Jerome: "He realized that 'in expounding Scripture we need God's Holy Spirit'; he saw that one cannot read or understand it otherwise 'than the Holy Spirit by Whom it was written demands'" (*Spiritus Paraclitus* IV.2).

This is the reason nearly all *Douay-Rheims Bible* editions contain the *Come Holy Ghost* prayer.

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

We continue to examine the Commission's response, *On the Author and Historical Truth of the Fourth Gospel* (1907). Internal reasons for Johannine authorship, given in question two, remains the focus. Recall three points stated earlier: (1) the Fourth Gospel itself, (2) its affiliation with 1 John, and (3) the Johanian Gospel's relation to the Synoptic Gospels. Point 2 needs to be expanded; the connection between St. John's Gospel and 1 John. Below are more factors to weigh for this connection (adapted from A. Wikenhauser, *New Testament Introduction*, pp. 525-526).

A sequence of expressions, formulas, and phrases appear only in 1, 2, 3 John and in the Fourth Gospel. Consider the following words:

to be of God  
to be of the world  
to have life  
to abide in God  
to abide in love  
to walk in light  
to walk in darkness  
the only begotten Son  
the Savior of the world  
the Paraclete.

One also discovers an identity of theological ideas in both the Johannine Gospel and 1 John. Examine the following truths:

Both books reveal the Father and Son are to be possessed together: John 5:23; 12:45; 14:9; 15:23 with 1 John 1:3; 2:22-24.

Both books reveal God sent His only begotten Son into the world: John 3:17 with 1 John 4:9-10, 14.

Both books reveal the eternal Son became Incarnate: John 1:14 with 1 John 4:2.

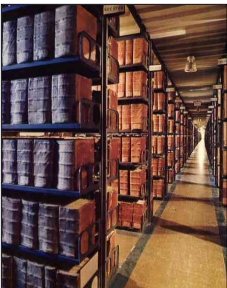
Both books reveal the Son takes away the sins of the world: John 1:29 with 1 John 3:5; 4:10.

Both books reveal true charity is manifested by keeping the commandments: John 14:15, 21; 15:10 with 1 John 2:3-5; 5:3.

Both books reveal the world will hate Jesus' followers: John 15:18-19; 17:14 with 1 John 3:13.

Both books reveal the one who believes has eternal life: John 3:15; 5:24; 20:31 with 1 John 5:10-12.

The next issue will continue to probe the internal reasons.



## Addressing Bible Difficulties: Catholics Must be Supernaturalists

The late Fr. Richard Gilsdorf's posthumous book, *The Signs of the Times* (ed., P. Beno), reprints an important article: "Samoa and Sacred Scripture." Here, this priest scholar lays out the chief differences between two opposing groups: "non-supernaturalists" and "supernaturalists."

Non-supernaturalists are described on page 244:

1. They do not acknowledge the special claims of the Bible to be divine revelation.
2. They treat the documents before them as they would any other literary data.
3. They reject the methodology of the analogy of faith.
4. They do not recognize the superior competence of the Magisterium.
5. They do not feel bound to a continuity or harmony with Tradition.

6. They demythologize, dismissing in advance any assertions of a supernatural character.

7. They indulge in shocking, debunking, sensationalizing, insinuating doubt."

Among the supernaturalists, depicted on page 245, are the "authentic Catholic exegetes":

1. They fully accept the supernatural order and a transcendent revealing God.
2. They uphold the authentic Catholic positions on inspiration, inerrancy, and historicity.
3. They interpret both Old and New Testaments in the total unitary biblical context.
4. They willingly follow the analogy of faith and allow Tradition and Magisterium to guide them.
5. They eagerly assist and support the Magisterium.

6. They use their skills to defend and illuminate the doctrines of faith, never to undermine that faith, to systematically insinuate doubt, or to unsettle the faithful by reckless hypotheses.

7. They are scientific professionals in every respect. With humility and pious reserve, they test their advanced theories among their peers and seek the judgment of the Church.

8. They are men of faith and prayer, knowing that holiness is their first and essential requirement."

The latter group represents a *sensus Catholicus*. With this attitude, future columns will attempt to defend the specific Biblical verses most often charged with error. This task is a main concern of the St. Jerome Biblical Guild.



## The Biblical World: A Chronology for the Pentateuch

The challenges in assigning a chronology to the last four books of the Pentateuch must not deter us. True, as the case with Genesis, complexities will likely remain until the Second Coming. Nonetheless, many solid resources offer a timeline for Exodus to Deuteronomy. As expected, approximate dates will vary in academia. Five adapted chronologies (all dates B.C.) are submitted below.

The *Haydock Study Bible* (pp. 1228-1229):  
 1571: Moses' birth  
 1531: Moses flees to Midian  
 1530: Caleb's birth  
 1491: Moses and the Bush  
 1491: The Exodus  
 1491: Ten Commandments  
 1490: The Tabernacle set up  
 1489: Korah's revolt  
 1452: Moses and the Rock  
 1451: Encampment in Moab.

The *NIV Archaeological Study Bible* (pp. 84, 155, 194, and 252):

- 1526: Moses' birth
- 1446: The Plagues
- 1446: The Passover
- 1446: The Exodus
- 1446-06: Desert wanderings
- 1445: Ten Commandments
- 1443: Canaan explored
- 1406: Moses' death.

Gleason Archer's *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (pp. 545-546):

- 1527: Moses' birth
- 1446: The Exodus.

Scott Hahn's *The Didache Series: Understanding The Scriptures* (p. 34):

- 1571: Moses' birth
- 1484: The events of Job
- 1446: God appears to Moses
- 1446: Israelites leave Egypt
- 1406: Moses' death.

Fr. John Laux's *Introduction to the Bible* (p. 25):

1460-20: Pentateuch written.

Dates for the Exodus are not settled (alternate dates are omitted from our timelines). Consult Jack Finegan's *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* pp. 224-245, and Dom Giuseppe Ricciotti's *The History of Israel* I:182-192.

In the final analysis, the chronological difficulties in the Pentateuch are not a drawback. Heed the words of Dr. Warren Carroll: "The fact is that we have in the Books of Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy a history of the times of Moses more complete than anything else available to us for any comparable period in the second millennium (2000-1000) B.C." (*A History of Christendom* I:61).



## Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam

J. M. J.

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

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

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

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

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

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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: *Free From All Error*

*Free From All Error: Authorship, Inerrancy, Historicity of Scripture, Church Teaching, and Modern Scripture Scholars* (Libertyville: Prow/Franciscan Marytown, 1990 rev. ed.) 196 pages. Out of print.

The late Fr. William G. Most, in a number of his published works (e.g., *The Consciousness of Christ and Catholic Apologetics Today*), deals in places with the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy. But *Free From All Error* is dedicated wholly to the subject. The book is a rare treatment on a topic that has been neglected in Catholic circles.

*Free From All Error* covers a wide variety of areas that are germane to inerrancy. The book's brief 26 chapters could really be expanded into separate tomes. Material is found on inspiration, inerrancy, authorship, the senses, prophecy fulfillment, science and religion,

history, genres, criticism, language, and archaeology.

The book starts off: "The most remarkable fact concerning Holy Scripture is that it is not only the Word of God but that God Himself, the Holy Spirit, is its chief author. This the Church tells us. At the same time, the Church also says that there is a human author, who remains free yet infallibly does what God wants him to do" (p. 1). Such reasonable facts are embedded throughout the text. Patristic and Magisterial citations are also found within the work. A good glossary of terms appears at the end of the book.

*Free From All Error* deserves an update and expansion. One may quibble over some points here and there. Nonetheless, the present edition is an aid in the defense of Holy Writ.

A postscript...

Fr. Most had been my Scripture professor in graduate school (where he refused a salary for his services as a professor of Scripture and Theology). I took the last course he taught before his passing (after a long illness); an elective course on the major prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Even before I began master's work, I would attend Father's public lectures on other topics (e.g., St. Paul, Apologetics, etc.), which were delivered at a parish in Northern Virginia in the early 1990s. Father was always happy to have guests (adults or children) and to field questions. Fr. Most was the one who first impressed upon me the gravity of inerrancy. *Veritas Scripturae* would not exist had it not been for this priest's influence. Please pray for the repose of the soul of Fr. Most.

