

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... The Gospels and the Interior Life

Father Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. (1877-1964), speaks of the Gospels in this manner: “If with humility, hope, and love, we read the divine words of Scripture, which are spirit and life, they contain for us a special grace that daily inclines us more to imitate the virtues of Christ, His meekness, patience, and heroic love on the cross. Besides the Holy Eucharist, the true food of the saints is to be found in the Scriptures: the word of God, transmitted by His only Son, the Word made flesh. Hidden under the letter is the living thought of God, which, if we are docile, the gifts of understanding and wisdom will make us penetrate and taste more and more” (*The Three Ages of the Interior Life* I:248).

One will be hard pressed to find a more learned, faithful, and reasonable teacher than Garrigou-Lagrange. His many writings, although theologically and philosophically deep, are at the same time embedded with practical advice for one’s growth in sanctity. The extract at left is a typical example. We will sit at the feet of this holy Dominican teacher.

Our guide tells us to approach God’s Word “with humility, hope, and love.” If there is one vice that will thwart progress during our research, it is the sin of pride. A consequence of original sin is our darkened intellects and weakened wills. Thus, humility does not come naturally to mankind. By God’s grace, we must become adult-like in our minds, but child-like in our hearts.

Garrigou-Lagrange goes on: “Besides the Holy Eucharist, the true food of the saints is to be found in the Scriptures.”

One will never starve spiritually with an interior life rooted in the Sacrament of the Altar, supplemented with the Divine Writings, and rounded out with Our Lady’s Rosary. If daily Mass attendance is not possible, then the next best thing is to read the Scriptures in front of the Blessed Sacrament.

Here is the Dominican one last time: “Hidden under the letter is the living thought of God.” Our loyal teacher says, in effect, that if we desire an intimate union with the Savior, we must read and study and pray with the Gospels.

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: Exodus 20:7

“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain” (Ex 20:7).

The Ten Commandments, revealed to Moses atop Mount Sinai, have been called the core of Old Testament ethics. So central were these laws, that they were reiterated in Deuteronomy 5:6-21, Moses' second address in the last book of the Pentateuch. The Commandments, etched in stone, are simply the natural law written on the hearts of all men. The phrase “Ten Commandments” is from the “ten words” (*‘āšeret hadd^hbārīm*) mentioned in Exodus 34:28, Deuteronomy 4:13, and 10:4. The commands are confirmed by Jesus Christ (Mt 5:17-28; Mk 7:9-13; Lk 16:17-18; Jn 7:19). For the Christian, the Decalogue equates to love of God and love of neighbor.

Returning to the Second Commandment, it should be noted that Exodus 20:7 is not an isolated warning about the misuse of God's sacred name (Lev 19:12; 24:16; Zech 5:1-4). On the significance of this “name” (*šēm*), Fr. P. Heinisch informs us: “The ‘word’ of God is a term denoting God's will, the ‘name’ of God is a term denoting God's person. Upon hearing it the Israelite would think of God Himself, His nature and attributes” (*Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 126). In other words, God's name discloses His very essence.

The New Testament expands upon the significance of the sacred “name.” The Son tells us, in His “name,” to petition the Father in prayer (Jn 15:16). St. Peter says in Jesus Christ's “name” we may be saved (Acts 4:12). St. Paul remarks that at the God-man's “name,” every knee will bow (Phil 2:10).

What do such warnings in the Old Testament, and the theological implications in the New, mean for the Church Militant today with respect to God's sacred name? The practical application of the Second Commandment means that we must speak with reverence of God, of His saints, and of His holy things. As well, the divine command requires truthfulness when taking oaths, demands our faithfulness in carrying them out, and expects an honorable fulfilling of vows (cf. L. Morrow, *My Catholic Faith*, p. 198).

St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that to take God's name in vain means to use His name falsely. This is not only an insult to God, but also a sin which injures the teller and also others. Such vain usage is truly an injustice (cf. *God's Greatest Gifts*, pp. 9-11).



Inerrancy Basics: Blessed John Duns Scotus on Bible Credibility

Blessed John Duns Scotus (d. 1308) is *Doctor Subtilis*: “The Subtle Doctor.” He is a luminary of the Franciscan Order. This worthy son of St. Francis is too little known today.

Blessed John left behind an important work of theology, titled *Ordinatio*. In its *Prologus* 2:1.100-119, there is a series of points marshaled to validate one's belief in the Scriptures. Here are a number of the points (adapted from the “Franciscan Archive,” www.franciscan-archive.org/index2.html and A. Dulles, *A History of Apologetics*, p. 129):

- The predictions of the books of the Prophets
- The agreement among the teachings of the Scriptures
- The authority of the Biblical writers
- The care of the Church in drawing up the canon

- The harmony of Divine Revelation with reason and natural morality
- The unreasonableness and immorality of those who reject such Divine Revelation
- The Biblical miracles which convert men to Christianity
- The testimonies to Christ given by unbelievers such as Josephus.

Some of the points have been covered in earlier issues of *Veritas Scripturae*. One area will be elaborated here: the authority of the Biblical writers.

This matter touches upon the claims of the human authors to be spokesmen on behalf of God. Even a cursory reading of the Scriptures testifies to an abundance of such declarations. Various expressions are employed for these bold kinds of assertions.

Read the passages at face value, and consider their weighty tone:

“the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken”

“the LORD has spoken”

“the LORD spoke thus to me”

“hear this word that the LORD has spoken”

“thus says the LORD”

“the Spirit of the LORD speaks by me”

“the word of the LORD came to me saying.”

The inquiring reader may wish to consult a concordance, and survey this vast amount of evidence (cf. L. Gaussen, *The Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures*, pp. 61-62). The claims of the sacred hagiographers must be taken seriously.

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The Church Fathers & Scripture: The Patristic Epoch and the Status of God's Word

Fr. Hugh Pope's *The Catholic Church and the Bible* testifies to the prominence of Scripture in the early centuries of the Faith. He writes: "Keeping for the moment to the age of the Fathers, quotations without end might be offered from the Fathers of the Church who are literally never tired of urging people, lay as well as cleric, to study the Bible: 'God gave it to you for you to read it' [On *Isaiah* 22.6], says St. Jerome, and again, 'Do what you read' [On *Micah* 2.8]; while St. Polycarp had long before said to the Philippians: 'I trust that you are well read in Holy Scripture and that nought is hid from you' [To the *Philippians* 12]. Readers of St. Cyril's *Catechetical Lectures* need not be told how emphatically he insisted on the necessity of knowing the Bible well" (p. 31).

The distinguished Biblicist then makes reference to the honor given to God's Word at the Ecumenical Councils. Pope says: "There is no doubt that at the Council of Nicaea the Sacred Book of the Gospels — intended to represent the Person of God the Judge — was placed in the royal seat in the midst of the seats reserved for the Bishops so that all might look at it; the same was the case at Ephesus and Chalcedon" (p. 32). The Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381, for the reception of coverts, announces in canon 7: "Thus we ensure that they spend a long time in the Church and listen to the Scriptures, and then we baptize them" (p. 32). Throughout Church history, conciliar dogmas and doctrines have been supported with Scripture verses.

The Catholic Church and the Bible continues with reference to a synod of Persian bishops in A.D. 405. Canon 12 states: "We all decide that it is fitting that on every Sunday the Gospel should be read as well as the other Books; also that preaching should continue until the third hour, and then at the fourth hour the Holy Sacrifice should be offered" (p. 33).

The quotations above allow us to cast a brief glimpse at life and practice in the nascent Catholic Church. It is evident that the Scriptures were a key component for the Fathers. One need only browse a basic Patristic text, such as Fr. J. Willis' *The Teachings of the Church Fathers*, to validate this fact. This means, then, that the faithful in the pew were regularly exposed to the Divine Writings.



St. Thomas Aquinas & Revelation: Commentary on Titus 3:3-7

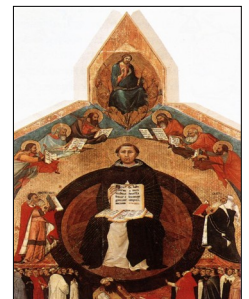
Father C. Baer's *Thomas Aquinas: Commentaries on St. Paul's Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, is an accessible exegetical tome from the Angelic Doctor. Titus 3:3-7 is rendered as follows: "For we ourselves also were some time unwise, incredulous, erring, slaves to divers desires and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But when the goodness and humanity of God our Saviour appeared: Not by the works of justice, which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us, by the laver of regeneration, and renovation of the Holy Ghost; Whom He hath poured forth upon us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour: That, being justified by His grace, we may be heirs, according to hope of life everlasting."

This Pauline section reveals the major components of his soteriology. There is mention of sin, the Incarnation, God's benevolence, grace, spiritual rebirth, divine sonship, etc. Space prevents the inclusion of Thomas' entire comments for the pericope (pp. 186-190).

Consider several Thomistic lines on St. Paul's statements on evangelization in verse 3 (reformatted in places): "For we ourselves also,' etc., he gives the reason for the foregoing, and mostly of the last, namely, that they should be mild. For someone could say: How shall we be meek to the infidels, how to the wicked? We cannot do this. He responds: Consider yourself, how you were. And so the best remedy against anger is the recognition of one's own weakness."

Remarks on verse 5: "For this it must be known that in the state of perdition man lacks two things which he has attained through Christ, namely, participation in the divine nature and abandonment of the old man... But a new nature is not acquired except through generation. Yet this nature is so given that it is added on to our nature, which still remains. In this way participation as a son of God is generated where man is not destroyed."

Finally, observations on verse 7: "Justified is the same as regenerated, which he had said earlier. In the justification of the wicked there are two termini: the end from which, which is the remission of sin, and this is renovation; and the end to which, which is the infusion of grace, and this pertains to regeneration."



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

Two of the four paragraphs contained in *Verbum Domini* 19 (titled "Sacred Scripture, inspiration and truth") have been examined already. We move ahead to paragraph three (italics in the original): "The Synod Fathers also stressed the link between the theme of inspiration and that of the *truth of the Scriptures* [cf. Synodal proposal 12]. A deeper study of the process of inspiration will doubtless lead to a greater understanding of the truth contained in the sacred books. As the Council's teaching states in this regard, the inspired books teach the truth: "since, therefore, all that the inspired authors, or sacred writers, affirm should be regarded as affirmed by the Holy Spirit, we must acknowledge that the books of Scrip-

ture firmly, faithfully and without error, teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the Sacred Scriptures. Thus, 'all scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be proficient, equipped for every good work' (2 Tim 3:16-17, Greek) [*Dei Verbum* 11]."

His Holiness underscores the tie between inspiration and truth in paragraph three (and again in four, which will be quoted in the next issue). It seems obvious: the divine charism of inspiration, and the subject of truth, stands or falls together. This inseparable link is reinforced by a multitude of interrelated Bible passages.

David begs God to "send out thy light and thy truth" (Ps 43:3). Isaiah proclaims "the God of truth" (Is 65:16). Jeremiah speaks of "the true God" (Jer 10:10). Jesus says He is "the truth" (Jn 14:6). St. Paul writes "Let God be true" (Rom 3:4). St. John hears that the Lord is "holy and true" (Rev 6:10).

Along these lines, recall that God cannot utter falsehoods. Numbers 23:19 says "God is not man, that He should lie." 1 Samuel 15:29 has "the Glory of Israel will not lie." Psalm 89:35 reveals "Once before I have sworn by my holiness, I will not lie to David." Titus 1:2 states "God, who never lies." Hebrews 6:18 discloses "it is impossible that God should prove false." 1 John 2:27 says "His anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie." Next issue will develop these themes.



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

Internal reasons for Johannine authorship, given in question two from *On the Author and Historical Truth of the Fourth Gospel* (1907) by the Biblical Commission, are still the focus. The three points of concern: (1) the Fourth Gospel itself, (2) its affiliation with 1 John, and (3) the Johanian Gospel's relation to the Synoptic Gospels. Look at Point 1.

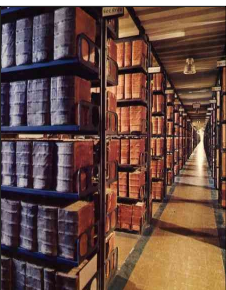
Most commentators on the Fourth Gospel will include the internal evidence for authorship (e.g., S. Ray, *St. John's Gospel*, pp. 29-33). One finds the same line of evidence in works of Apologetics which defend the Gospels (e.g., G. Duggan, *Beyond Reasonable Doubt*, pp. 99-103). Below are two propositions, expanding upon Duggan.

1. The writer is someone of Hebraic descent from the same milieu as Jesus Christ. The writer shows a familiarity with the Old Testament books (Jn 2:14-17; 12:12-16, 37-41; 19:23-24, 31-37). As well, the writer displays a knowledge of the Jewish religion and customs of the time: the Feasts of Passover (Jn 2: 13, 23; 6:4; 11:55), Tabernacles (Jn 7:2, 37), Dedication (Jn 10:22), and even the Sabbath (Jn 5:9; 9:14; 19:31). The writing style is Semitic.

2. The writer is an inhabitant of Palestine. He knows geography: Bethany is beyond the Jordan (Jn 1:28), Cana sits in Galilee (Jn 2:1), Aenon is near Salim (Jn 3:23), Sychar lies in Samaria (Jn 4:5), the Galilean shore is distinct from the sea

of Tiberias (Jn 6:1), and Bethany is about two miles from Jerusalem (Jn 11:18). The writer also knows Jerusalem topography: the pool of Bethesda has five porticoes and is near the Sheep Gate (Jn 5:2), mounts exist in Tiberias and Olivet (Jn 6:3; 8:1), the portico of Solomon is part of the Temple (Jn 10:23), there is a garden across the Kidron valley (Jn 18:1), and a pavement is found in the Roman praetorium (Jn 19:13).

The following sources were also utilized: C. Callan, *The Four Gospels*, pp. 403-404; A. Fuentes, *Guide to the Bible*, p. 187; and J. Gavigan, ed., *The Navarre Bible: The Gospel of Saint John*, pp. 14-15. The next issue will discuss some additional propositions.



Addressing Bible Difficulties: Scholarly Tools for the Task, Part I

A reliable personal library is a necessity for the inerrantist who desires to explain and defend God's Word. Sound books, of course, are a risk-free investment. Some of the following suggestions may be reviewed in a future "Book Recommendation" column. As well, some texts have been mentioned in past bulletins. The list below is certainly not exhaustive, and some works are no longer in print. Nonetheless, below are the building blocks. For purchases, visit www.bookfinder.com, which carries used books.

Collections of Magisterial pronouncements on the Bible:

- D. Bechard, ed., *The Scripture Documents*
- C. Louis, ed., *Rome and the Study of Scripture*
- D. Murphy, ed., *The Church and the Bible*.

Bible versions:

- *Douay-Rheims*
- *Latin Vulgate*
- *New Jerusalem Bible*
- *Revised Standard Version: Catholic Edition*.

Original language texts:

- *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: 4th Edition*
- *The Greek New Testament: 4th Edition*
- *Novum Testament Graece: 27th Edition*.

Dictionaries/encyclopedias:

- G. Bromiley, gen. ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia I-IV*
- S. Hahn, gen. ed., *Catholic Bible Dictionary*
- L. Hartman, et al., *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible*
- J. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible*
- J. Steinmueller and K. Sullivan, eds., *Catholic Biblical Encyclopedia*.

Synopses/harmonies:

- K. Aland, ed., *Synopsis of the Four Gospels*
- W. Crocket, *A Harmony of the Books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles*
- S. Hartdegen, *A Chronological Harmony of the Gospels*.

Concordances:

- R. Whitaker, *The Eerdmans Analytical Concordance to the Revised Standard Version of the Bible*
- N. Thompson and R. Stock, *Concordance to the Bible*.

Atlases/Maps:

- *The Great Adventure: A Journey through the Bible, Then and Now Bible Map Book*
- *Rose Book of Bible Charts, Maps, and Time Lines*.

Next issue will offer more tools which will come to the aid of the Sacred Page.



The Biblical World: The Lands of Holy Writ

Divine Revelation occurred in space and time. This means the Scriptures are concerned about real places, real events, and real persons. There is an incentive, then, for acquiring some knowledge of the lands of the Bible. An atlas at hand will be beneficial at this stage.

Two continents are in view for the student of Holy Writ: Asia and Africa. Within this setting, one has five main bodies of water: the Black Sea, Caspian Sea, Persian Gulf, Red Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea. Furthermore, each continent also has a major river. Asia exhibits the combined Tigris-Euphrates River, which flows southbound from Asia Minor and Armenia, and empties into the Persian Gulf. Africa boasts of the Nile River, which runs northbound, and empties into the Mediterranean.

Within Asia rests a narrow strip of land that is familiar to every Christian; either called Canaan, Israel, Palestine, or the Holy Land. Here sat a crossroads for the major civilizations of the ancient world. This locale had a strategic advantage within the Ancient Near East. In times of peace, Palestine was ideal for trade and commerce. But a great disadvantage was that during times of war, the same locale was at risk because of the great superpowers/empires around the perimeter (cf. M. Duggan's *The Consuming Fire*, pp. 12-13 and P. Wright's *Holman QuickSource Bible Atlas*, pp. 21-29).

Palestine's layout consists of six main contours:

1) Coastal Plain: the coast next to the Mediterranean, which runs up to the peninsula

of Mount Carmel.

2) Shefelah or Lowlands: the terrain that ascends from the low Coastal Plain.

3) Hill Country or Judean Hills or Cis-Jordan Hills: a north-south ridge which bisects the lands of Samaria and Judea.

4) Rift Valley: a depression, below the level of the Mediterranean, which spans the entire length of Palestine.

5) Trans-Jordan Hills: rugged hills which rise from the low Rift Valley to the high Plateau.

6) Plateau: a fertile tableland in the north, and a semi-desert in the south (cf. J. Jensen's *Old Testament Survey*, pp. 31-33 and *New Testament Survey*, pp. 69-71).

Of course, Biblical events did occur outside Palestine. But it remains a unique spot, and the Scripture student gains by learning the land's details.



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:

A Companion to Scripture Studies I-III

John E. Steinmueller, *A Companion to Scripture Studies I-III* (NY: Wagner / Houston: Lumen Christi, 1969) 614 pp., 335 pp., 376 pp.

This three-volume set, published over a generation ago, is still one of the notable tomes of Catholic Biblical scholarship in the English speaking world. One endorsement on the dust jacket states: "The author's learning and fitness for his task are beyond question, his judgment and method are of the best, his experience in teaching and writing have complemented and perfected a thorough preparation and background." Other like-minded praises could be cited.

The late Msgr. Steinmueller was a renowned scholar, a consultant to the Biblical Commission, and an able writer. This loyal son of the Church also had parish experience, which was evident in his concrete approach to God's Word.

Volume I is a general intro, Volume II is dedicated to the Old Testament, and Volume III covers the New Testament. Each book is serviceable even in isolation. The volumes were initially published in the 1940s, then reissued in the 1960s.

Volume I discusses the basics that will provide a solid grounding for the beginning student, while offering plenty of riches for the experienced reader. Major sections are devoted to inspiration, the canon, texts and versions, hermeneutics, the history of exegesis, sacred antiquities (e.g., places, ritual, etc.), archaeology, and geography. Pages 4 to 57, devoted to Biblical inspiration, remains a perennial treatment on this central doctrine. An appendix to the volume includes key Magisterial declarations on the Bible.

Volume II examines the Old Testament. Each book, Genesis through Malachi, is given an overview. Using Joshua as an example, one has sections on argument and division, aim, date and author, Joshua and the Pentateuch, credibility, and texts. Among eight appendices are the main dates in Israel's history, lists of kings and rulers (Hebrew and pagan), and the Biblical Commission's 1909 response on Genesis.

Volume III mainly follows the format in the previous volume, but with the New Testament. Chapters on the lives of Christ and St. Paul are helpful. Three appendices cover historical dates, book dates, and the Commission's 1964 instruction.

The set remains a classic work. Please pray for the repose of the soul of Msgr. Steinmueller.

