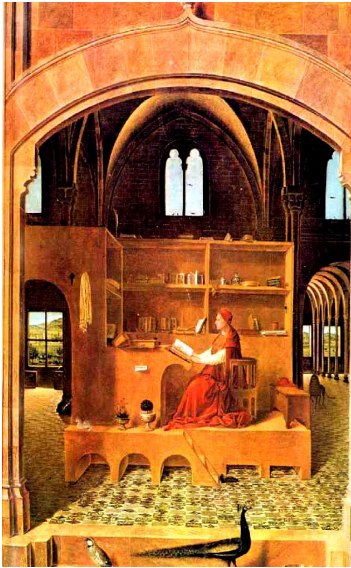


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Scripture Memorization and Exegesis from the Old Testament:
 Habakkuk 2:2-4 2

Scripture Memorization and Exegesis from the New Testament:
 1 John 2:15-17 3

Inerrancy Basics:
 Counsels from St. Teresa of Avila 4

The Church Fathers and Scripture:
 The Symbols of the Evangelists 5

St. Thomas Aquinas and Revelation:
 His Works on the Old Testament 6

The Magisterium Speaks:
 Vatican II's *Dei Verbum* 11:
 The Second Paragraph and the Vexing Clause 7

The Pontifical Biblical Commission:
Letter to Cardinal Suhard, Part I 8

Addressing Bible Difficulties:
 Online Sources 9

The Biblical World:
 The Epoch of the Prophets 10

The Life of Christ:
 A Preview to St. Mark's Gospel 11

Book Recommendation (out-of-print):
The Catholic Student's "Aids" to the Study of the Bible I-V 12

Book Recommendation (in-print):
Learning Biblical Hebrew: Reading for Comprehension – An Introductory Grammar 13

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: Earthly and Heavenly Things

“If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?”, the Savior inquired of Nicodemus, recorded in John 3:12 amidst their late night exchange. The context of John 3:1—4:3 points to baptismal regeneration, and the Council of Trent (1545—63) used parts of this pericope for clarifying original sin, justification, and the sacraments. But there is an overlooked teaching within this Johannine section: one finds some implicit evidence for the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy.

A reasonable interpretation is that “earthly things” points to non-salvific subjects, while “heavenly things” are salvific. This is no forced exegesis, as St. Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444) explains the question by the Son of God: “If you out of extreme foolishness did not receive a doctrine that does not exceed the understanding human beings are capable of, how can I explain things more divine?” (“Commentary on the Gospel of John 2.1” in J. Elowsky, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* IVa:119).

The Apostle, twice, reports from the sacred mouth of Jesus His use of the term “believe” (*pisteuete* and *pisteuseite*) — a word linked to the virtue of faith. The Master indicates no less credence is to be required for divinely revealed “earthly things” (*epigeia*) as for divinely revealed “heavenly things” (*epourania*).

The restricted or limited inerrantists think the Bible errs in “earthly things” (i.e., non-salvific subjects). Hence, if consistent, they must hold that God, in some cases, requires Christians to believe untruths. This is irrational.

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:

Habakkuk 2:2-4

“And the LORD answered me: ‘Write the vision; make it plain upon tablets, so he may run who reads it. For still the vision awaits its time; it hastens to the end — it will not lie. If it seem slow, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. Behold, he whose soul is not upright in him shall fail, but the righteous shall live by his faith’” (Hab 2:2-4).

The familiar *Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition* (1965, 1966) above is complemented by the *New Jerusalem Bible* (1985) below:

“Then Yahweh answered me and said, ‘Write the vision down, inscribe it on tablets to be easily read. For the vision is for its appointed time, it hastens towards its end and it will not lie; although it may take some time, wait for it, for come it certainly will before too long. You see, anyone whose heart is not upright will succumb, but the upright will live through faithfulness.’”

Christians who study the debates about salvation recognize this portion from Habakkuk 2:4: “the righteous shall live by his faith” (*w^otsaddiq be’ēmūnāthō yichāyeh*). We will come back to this verse. First, a brief look at the prophet.

Habakkuk’s time frame began before circa 609 B.C., to the Southern Kingdom of Judah. His contemporaries likely were Zephaniah and Jeremiah (cf. J. Boice, *The Minor Prophets* II:76-77; J. Castellet, *Meet the Bible* II:17-18; L. Dennis, et al., *ESV Study Bible*, p. 1718). A fact: one of the first discoveries at Qumran in 1947, among the Dead Sea Scrolls, had been a commentary on the book of Habakkuk (cf. B. Vawter, *The Conscience of Israel*, p. 225).

The seer Habakkuk, in his small book of three chapters, is placed within the “minor prophets.” His composition is mainly a dialogue between himself and God. The book may be divided in two: Habakkuk 1:1—2:20 shows his failure to grasp God’s ways, and then a yielding to the Sovereign Will in Habakkuk 3:1-19. The first half, wherein the prophet proclaims God shall meet out justice while also offering redemption, provides the context for the valuable pericope of Habakkuk 2:2-4 (cf. B. Arnold and B. Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament*, pp. 449-450; J. Simon, *A Scripture Manual* I:362).

Now, return to Habakkuk 2:4 and the topic of salvation. The extract is cited three times, with variation, in the New Testament. Romans 1:17 says: “He who through faith is righteous shall live.” Galatians 3:11, likewise: “He who through faith is righteous shall live.” Hebrews 10:38 states: “my righteous one shall live by faith.” The line from Habakkuk, employed in the New Covenant, has been misread to reduce “faith” to essentially “trust” in Jesus Christ; the lone human act to secure one’s final destiny (cf. H. Kerr, ed., *A Compend of Luther’s Theology*, pp. 98-106; A. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei* II:1-97).

But that is one aspect to the Gospel’s teaching on soteriology. Trust is certainly a component of faith (cf. Gal 3:6); the necessary theological virtue for salvation (cf. Heb 11:6). However, man’s complete response to the Good News demands more than trust in the Savior. The Triune God is also owed from every believer his intellectual assent to revealed truth (cf. 1 Thess 2:13), his obedience (cf. Rom 1:5; 16:25-26), his practice of good works (cf. Jas 2:14-26), and his grace-driven charity (cf. Jn 14:15). For the proper understanding of these points, consult the Council of Trent’s 1546 *Decree on Original Sin*, 1547 *Decree on Justification*, and the 1547 *Decree on the Sacraments* (cf. L. Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, pp. 250-269; R. Sungenis, *Not By Faith Alone*, pp. 69-71, 517-553).

One finds no “easy believe-ism” in the book of Habakkuk. The heart of his message is that God will punish the infidelity of the Chosen People through the coming invasion of the Chaldeans. Final perseverance was required of Judah, and will be required from Catholics. In this vein, Habakkuk 3:2 will cry out to God: “in wrath remember mercy” (*b^erōghez rachēm*).

Fr. Joseph Dheilily explains: “It has been said that revelation remains fundamentally the same in spite of the great development brought to it by Christ. The nature of God, the character of true religion, sin and grace, the calling to holiness and apostleship, the kingdom of God and the happiness of man, it is all these that the Christian learns about in his reading of the different prophets’ teaching” (*Prophets and Prophecies*, p. 128).



Scripture Memorization and Exegesis from the New Testament:

1 John 2:15-17

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides for ever” (1 Jn 2:15-17).

The quotation above is the usual *Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition* (1965, 1966). For comparison, here is the rendering from the *Knox Bible* (1950):

“Do not bestow your love on the world, and what the world has to offer; the lover of this world has no love of the Father in him. What does the world offer? Only gratification of corrupt nature, gratification of the eye, the empty pomp of living; these things take their being from the world, not from the Father. The world and its gratifications pass away; the man who does God’s will outlives them, for ever.”

As well, consider the *Douay-Rheims* in the *Haydock Study Bible* (1859):

“Love not the world, nor those things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him: For all that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life: which is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the concupiscence thereof. But he that doth the will of God, abideth for ever.”

The writings of St. John the Beloved include the Fourth Gospel, the Apocalypse, and three Epistles. These last letters includes First John; a doctrinal and practical guide amongst the Johannine literature. The Epistle’s origin, its audience, and dating, have been given a large amount of discussion (cf. J. Gavigan, et al., *The Navarre Bible: The Catholic Epistles*, pp. 151-153; T. Mossman, et al., *The Great Commentary of Cornelius a Lapide: Saint John’s Epistles, Saint Jude’s Epistle*, pp. xvii-xxxii; B. Orchard, et al., *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, pp. 1185-1186).

The many themes covered in First John are the Incarnation, the life of grace, sin, keeping the commandments, false teachers, the joy of being a child of God, charity, faith, and prayer

(consult the outline headings in C. Lattey, et al., *The Westminster Version of the Sacred Scriptures, The New Testament* IV:132-148). The Apostle’s themes, through five chapters, are embedded with the necessity of “truth” (1 Jn 1:6, 8; 2:4-5, 8, 21, 27; 3:18-19; 4:6; 5:7, 20). This affects the interior life, as the believer fights against sin. This spiritual battle is the focus in the pericope of 1 John 2:15-17. Here are three points for consideration.

Firstly, the term “world” (*kosmou; kosmon; kosmō; or kosmos*) is nearly always used in a pejorative fashion (cf. 1 Jn 2:2, 15-17; 3:1, 13, 17; 4:1, 3-5, 9, 14, 17; 5:4-5, 19). This is that domain of Satan which the Church Militant, with God’s supernatural aid, must confront in this life. The faithful need not live in terror, but must remain vigilant, confident in God’s help.



Secondly, warnings speak about the “lust of the flesh” (*epithymia tēs sarkos*), “lust of the eyes” (*epithymia tōn ophthalmōn*), and “pride of life” (*alazoneia tou biou*). Catholic doctrine calls this “concupiscence”: morally speaking, this is a “disordered inclination to sense pleasures, against the direction of reason” (P. Parente, et al., *Dictionary of Dogmatic Theology*, p. 55). This is not sin in itself, but a consequence of original sin (cf. Rom 7:14-25). Concupiscence, more strictly, is sensuality. This inclination to sin is a life-long struggle (cf. Parente, p. 56).

Thirdly, St. John speaks about perseverance; by accomplishing the “will of God” (*thelēma tou theou*). This striving to do the perfect and holy will of God, only possible when enabled by divine grace, is a common exhortation from Our Lord in the Synoptic Gospels (cf. Mt 6:10; Mk 3:35; Lk 12:47). First John, one finds, aligns with the Apostle’s Gospel with a similar appeal from the Savior (cf. Jn 7:17). The rest of the New Testament directs this same counsel to Christians (cf. Acts 21:14; Rom 12:2; Eph 5:17; Col 1:9; 1 Thess 4:3; Heb 10:36). This alignment of one’s will with God’s will has been described by the great spiritual masters as the key to sanctity. Fr. Lorenzo Scupoli, in *The Spiritual Combat*, prays fittingly: “Behold, O my God and Creator, the offering I make of my entire being — I submit my will entirely to thine; dispose of me as Thou wouldst in life and in death, in time or eternity” (p. 174).

One method to assist the student of the Holy Bible in grappling with the topic of Biblical inerrancy is to study the saints and notable scholars on the subject. This column has examined saints such as St. Francis de Sales (cf. *Veritas Scripturae*, 2014, vol. 6) and St. Francis of Assisi (cf. *Veritas Scripturae*, 2020, vol. 12). Consider now the great Spanish Carmelite: St. Teresa of Avila.

Teresa de Ahumada (1515—1582), via Divine Providence, would become one of the genuine reformers of religious life, and an eminent teacher on prayer. She is probably best known through her classic works such as *The Way of Perfection* and *Interior Castle*. Within the saint's writings, not to be overlooked are her remarks about the Sacred Scriptures. Consider three counsels from *The Book of Her Life*; her autobiography, finished about 1565 (cf. K. Kavanaugh and O. Rodriguez, trans., *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila* I:35-51).

St. Teresa's first counsel:

"I mean by this that, if the soul does not find itself in possession of this great strength, and is not helped by devotion or by visions, it must not consider its strength to be secure. For, though it may not be aware of any immediate harm, great harm might be caused it by slow degrees; for, as far as I can see and learn by experience, the soul must be convinced that a thing comes from God only if it is in conformity with Holy Scripture; if it were to diverge from that in the very least, I think I should be incomparably more firmly convinced that it came from the devil than I previously was that it came from God, however sure I might have felt of this" (*The Book of Her Life*, chap. 25). St. Teresa of Avila had received many divine communications (cf. T. Dubay, *Fire Within: St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, and the Gospel — On Prayer*, pp. 243-255). But she warns: if such manifestations conflict with Scripture, they are false visions that deserve rejection. This deference to God's Word should be a rule for every member of Holy Mother Church. The renowned Carmelite leaves a holy example.

The renowned Carmelite leaves a holy example.

More guidance from St. Teresa:

"And now the devil began to contrive that one person after another should hear that I had received some kind of revelation about this matter, and people came to me in great concern to say that these were bad times and that it might be that something would be alleged against me and I should have to go before the Inquisitors. But they only amused me and made me laugh, because I never had any fear about this. I knew quite well that in matters of faith no one would ever find me transgressing even the smallest ceremony of the Church, and that for the Church or for any truth of Holy Scripture I would undertake to die a thousand deaths" (*The Book of Her Life*, chap. 33). The last sentence gives a stunning declaration: this illustrious mystic would die, repeatedly, for merely a single teaching within Divine Revelation. Today's advocate of an "error-filled Bible" would be embarrassed by such a sentence, but the inerrantist rejoices at this bold line.

A final consideration from St. Teresa:

"My spirit seemed to be plunged into that Majesty of which I have been conscious on other occasions, and to be filled with It. In this Majesty I was given to understand a truth which is the fulfilment of all truths, yet I cannot tell how, for I saw nothing. Someone said to me — I could not see who, but I was quite clear that it was the Truth Itself: 'This that I am doing for thee is no small thing, but one of the things for which thou art greatly indebted to Me; for all the harm which comes to the world is due to a failure to know the truths of Scripture in the clarity of their truth, of which not a tittle shall fail.' I thought that I had always believed this and that all the faithful believed it" (*The Book of Her Life*, chap. 40). This beloved religious asserts that the Lord conveyed to her that the damage inflicted upon humanity was a result of its ignorance of the veracity of God's Word.

Quotations from *The Book of Her Life* are from E. Allison Peers, trans. and ed., *The Life of Teresa of Jesus: The Autobiography of Teresa of Avila*, pages 239, 312, and 388.

The Church Fathers and Scripture:

The Symbols of the Evangelists

“The Fathers of the Church were writers who witnessed to and helped clarify the apostolic Tradition over the course of nearly seven hundred years... Theology takes the data of revelation and reflects upon it so that we can grasp it more deeply, coherently, and comprehensively. Some of these earliest Fathers made masterful contributions along these lines,” notes Dr. Marcellino D’Ambrosio in *When the Church Was Young: Voices of the Early Fathers*, page 294. One area for such reflection may be discovered in the Patristic remarks on the Four Evangelists: Ss. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The Fathers saw the symbolism of the Gospel authors in light of the Biblical texts on the four living creatures from Ezekiel 1:10 and Revelation 4:7. This application is found in St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.11.8; St. Jerome, *Homily on Mark* 75; St. Augustine, *Harmony of the Gospels* 1.6.9; St. Gregory the Great, *Homilies on Ezekiel* 1.4.1; and others in the Patrology epoch (cf. K. Stevenson and M. Glerup, eds., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament XIII:4-6*; W. Weinrich, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament XII:63-65*).

The Patristic literature had variants for some Evangelists (cf. W. McDonald, et al., *New Catholic Encyclopedia* V:654; H. Daniel-Rops, *Jesus and His Times* I:37). But Jerome, the “Father of Biblical Studies,” would shape a common symbolism (cf. H. Kramer, *The Book of Destiny: An Open Statement of the Authentic and Inspired Prophecies of the Old and New Testament*, pp. 120-122).



Here is St. Jerome, in his preface to his *Commentary on Matthew*, an exemplar: “The first face of a man signifies Matthew, who began his narrative as though about a man: ‘The book of the generation of Jesus Christ the Son of David, the son of Abraham.’ The second [face signifies] Mark in whom the voice of a lion roaring in the wilderness is heard: ‘A voice of one shouting in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’ The third [is the face] of the calf which prefigures that the evangelist Luke began with Zachariah the priest. The fourth [face signifies] John the evangelist who, having taken up eagle’s wings and hastening toward higher matters, discusses the Word of God” (T. Scheck, trans., *The Fathers of the Church* 117:55).

This symbolism is based on the unique beginnings from the four Gospels (cf. L. Hartman, et al., *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 705). There is great depth in the openings in Matthew 1:1-17; Mark 1:1-8; Luke 1:1-4; and John 1:1-18. St. Matthew commences his tome with the fleshly generation of Christ with respect to His sacred humanity. St. Mark opens his book with the might of John the Baptizer’s preaching, as well as the regal power of the King of kings. St. Luke begins his treatise with the vision to the priest Zachary. St. John’s prologue contemplates the eternal generation of the Word in view of His divinity (cf. R. Badas, *Biblical Questions* II:2). Fr. John Laux amplifies: “This symbolism is of deep significance, expressing as it does the human, the prophetic, the sacerdotal, and the divine character of Christ” (*Introduction to the Bible*, p. 214).

St. Thomas Aquinas and Revelation:

His Works on the Old Testament

“Given Aquinas’s professional duties, it should not be surprising that biblical commentaries form a substantial part of the Thomistic corpus. In his two stints as a master of the sacred page at Paris, he would lecture in the academic year on a book of the Bible, and the lectures would be made available for copying. Even when he was not at Paris but back in Italy in the service of his order, he seems to have devoted a fair amount of his lecturing to the Bible, although he enjoyed more freedom in deciding his curricular offerings to the Dominicans in his charge. The biblical commentaries constitute between one-fifth to one-fourth of his extant writings,” notes Dr. Joseph Wawrykow (*The Westminster Handbooks to Christian Theology: The Westminster Handbook to Thomas Aquinas*, p. 141). With this background, consider the Common Doctor as a teacher of the Sacred Page.

Below is a survey of the main Old Testament books linked to St. Thomas Aquinas. Details are from Fr. Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas, Volume 1: The Person and His Work*, pages 328-329, 337-341, and 431-432 (supplemented by Fr. J. Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas D’Aquino: His Life, Thought, and Works*, pp. 368-370). Torrell’s opus has a third edition forthcoming; some particulars may need revision per the latest scholarship:

- Job: according to Tolomeo of Lucca, this was Thomas’ teaching to the brothers in Orvieto (1261-1265). The expositions took place during the reign of Pope Urban IV. The lectures were held at the Dominican Priory of San Domenico. The main themes developed were Providence, the story of Job, the suffering of the just, and the human condition and Divine governance.

- Psalms: perhaps started during Thomas’ academic year of 1273, but date uncertain, and probably ended because of his illness and death. Per Reginald of Piperno, this unfinished commentary covers the first 54 chapters of the Davidic Psalter. The work is Reginald’s *reportatio* (i.e., report) of the lec-

tures of Thomas at Naples. He made use of the Gallican Psalter, the Roman Psalter, and St. Jerome’s translation from the Hebrew.

- Isaiah: often dated from Thomas’ early teaching period in Paris, but may have been composed earlier; near the end of his stay in Cologne. Thus, 1251/52 to 1252/53. Friar Jacobinus of Asti, after Thomas’ passing, transcribed the work. Isaiah 1—11 seems to be the work of a university master, while Isaiah 12—66 is a literal gloss. The two parts are to be dated separately. The work is a “cursory reading” (i.e., rapid analysis) on the literal sense of the book. It has some *collationes* (i.e., marginal notes) for pastoral and spiritual applications.

- Jeremiah: probably dated to the end of Thomas’ time in Cologne; 1251/52 to 1252/53. Could also be his teaching as a lector at a Dominican priory. A “cursory reading” upon the literal sense, with *collationes*. Thus, similar to the work on Isaiah.

- Lamentations: dated with Jeremiah, during Thomas’ time in Cologne; 1251/52 to 1252/53. Another “cursory reading” on the literal sense. Likewise, could have been his teaching as a lector at a Dominican priory.

We close with an interesting fact on the commentaries from the Angelic Doctor: “A brilliant study of Thomas Aquinas’s secretaries has illustrated the difficulties which were experienced in getting clean texts of his lectures. He had skilled reporters, and yet the work was so exacting that he sometimes offered his own draft for copy to save undue strain. Like many great scholars he wrote in an almost illegible hand, the *littera inintelligibilis*. Some of his secretaries made a special study of transcribing it legibly, and there was a chain system for taking down his dictation. The Dominicans were so proud of him and so convinced of the value of his work as to give him every possible facility. Lesser men made shift as they could” (B. Smalley, in *The Cambridge History of the Bible* II:202).



The Magisterium Speaks:

Vatican II's *Dei Verbum* 11: The Second Paragraph and the Vexing Clause

Last issue examined the first of the two paragraphs in Vatican II's *Dei Verbum* 11 (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation [1965]). The first paragraph on Biblical inspiration is the necessary prelude to the second on inerrancy. This is reasonable — inspiration and inerrancy are truths that stand and fall together.

The second paragraph, which requires much attention for careful analysis, may be consulted in the official Latin text, and in two well-known English translations (those edited by Flannery and Abbott), in *Veritas Scripture*, volume 12. As well, Fr. Brian W. Harrison, O.S., a first-class scholar (whom I have the honor of calling a friend), has suggested two alternative translations for the second paragraph of *Dei Verbum* 11 in his outstanding thesis, *The Teaching of Pope Paul VI on Sacred Scripture: With Special Reference to the Historicity of the Gospels* (1997). For a justification of these additional renderings, consult the thesis (pp. 188-194), or view the related articles found at the Roman Theological Forum (www.rtf.org). His translations are below.

The first alternative:

“Since, therefore, everything affirmed by the inspired authors, or sacred writers, must be held as affirmed by the Holy Spirit, we must in consequence acknowledge that in the books of Sacred Scripture the truth, which by God’s will was recorded in that form for the sake of our salvation, is taught firmly, faithfully, and without error” (p. 192).

The second alternative:

“Since, therefore, everything affirmed by the inspired authors, or sacred writers, must be held as affirmed by the Holy Spirit, we must in consequence acknowledge that the books of Scripture teach the truth firmly, faithfully, and without error, keeping in mind that it was for the sake of our salvation that God wanted this truth recorded in the form of Sacred Writings” (p. 193).

For this crucial second paragraph, many points deserve an inquiry; to be covered in upcoming columns. For now, the focus is the clause: “for the sake of our salvation” (Latin: *nostrae salutis causa*).

The claim is made that the clause limits or restricts inerrancy — to include faith and morals, but to exclude history and science. Fr. William Most, a trained classicist who wrote a book on the Latin language, insists that on linguistic grounds this restriction is a misreading of the line. He points out, in part, “the clause could be either *restrictive* or *descriptive*. If restrictive, it would mean that *only* things needed for salvation would be free of error. If descriptive, it simply describes the Scriptures as for our salvation. We admit that the words are ambiguous, *provided that we ignore the context* — which is something no scholar should ever do with any document... If Vatican II had really wanted to make that clause clearly restrictive, there is an unambiguous Latin construction that would have made it clear called *qui quidem* with the subjunctive. The Council did not use that structure” (*Catholic Apologetics Today*, p. 217, italics in original). Most was fluent in many languages, and understood proper sentence structure and the rules of language. Elsewhere, he insists on this point of grammar for the correct reading of the clause in his opus on the veracity of the Bible; *Free from All Error*, page 38. Moreover, when the doctrinal Commission at the Council responded to matters about inerrancy, they replied there is no material limitation to the truth of Holy Writ, keeping with its formal specification for salvation (cf. Harrison, pp. 172-194). Put another way: the clause is not a limit to inerrancy, but indicates the finality or purpose of Scripture — it is for mankind and his salvation (cf. L. Feingold, *Faith Comes from What is Heard*, p. 335).

The clause is a description; it is not a restriction. More details next issue.



The Pontifical Biblical Commission:

The Letter to Cardinal Suhard, Part I

Here is the first portion of the 1948 text:

“To the Most Eminent Father, Archbishop Emmanuel Celestine Suhard, Cardinal Priest of the Holy Roman Church of the Title of Saint Onophrius, Archbishop of Paris, Concerning the Time of Documents of the Pentateuch and Concerning the Literary Form of the Eleven Chapters of Genesis.

Your Eminence,
The Holy Father has been pleased to entrust to the examination of the Pontifical Commission for Biblical Studies two questions, which have been recently submitted to His Holiness concerning the sources of the Pentateuch and the historicity of the first eleven chapters of Genesis. These two questions with their considerations and propositions have been the object of the most careful study on the part of the Right Reverend Consultors and the Most Eminent Cardinals, Members of the above mentioned Commission. As the result of their deliberations, His Holiness has deigned to approve the following reply in the audience granted to the undersigned on the 16th of January, 1948.

The Pontifical Biblical Commission is pleased to pay homage to the sense of filial confidence that has inspired this step, and wishes to correspond by a sincere effort to promote Biblical Studies, while safeguarding for them the greatest freedom within the limits of the traditional teaching of the Church. This freedom has been explicitly affirmed by the Encyclical of the Sovereign Pontiff gloriously reigning, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, in the following terms: ‘The Catholic commentator, inspired by an active and ardent love of his subject and sincerely devoted to Holy Mother Church, should in no way be deterred from grappling again and again with these difficult problems, hitherto unsolved,



not only that he may refute the objections of the adversaries, but also may attempt to find a satisfactory solution, which will be in full accord with the doctrine of the Church, in particular with the traditional teaching regarding the inerrancy of Sacred Scripture, and which will at the same time satisfy the indubitable conclusions of profane sciences. Let all the other sons of the Church bear in mind that the efforts of these resolute laborers in the vineyard of the Lord should be judged not only with equity and justice, but also with the greatest charity; all, moreover, should abhor that intemperate zeal which imagines that whatever is new should for that reason be opposed or suspected’ (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 35 [1943], p. 319; English Edition, Vatican Press, p. 22).

If one would rightly understand and interpret in the light of this recommendation of the Sovereign Pontiff the three official answers previously given by the Biblical Commission regarding the above-named questions, namely, that of 23rd June, 1905, on the narratives in the historical books of Holy Scripture which have only the appearance of being historical (*Enchiridion Biblicum*, 154), that of 27th June, 1906, on the Mosaic authenticity of the Pentateuch (*Enchiridion Biblicum*, 174-177), and that of 30th June, 1909, on the historical character of the first three chapters of Genesis (*Enchiridion Biblicum*, 332-339), one will readily grant that these answers are in no way opposed to further and truly scientific examination of these problems in accordance with the results obtained during these last forty years. Consequently, the Biblical Commission believes that there is no need, at least for the moment, to promulgate any new decrees regarding these questions.”

The latter portion of *The Letter* will appear in the next issue.

The student of the Holy Scriptures, per state in life or vocation, should use his time wisely to acquire a knowledge and love of Divine Revelation (cf. Eph 5:15-17). One goal, during this effort, is to be a vital member of the Catholic Church, while one strives for union with the Blessed Trinity (cf. 2 Pet 3:18).

One means for such a task is to utilize both audio and video sources online. Here are some suggestions. Of course, they are not exhaustive, and a number of helpful sources will be omitted (because of space limitations and/or my ignorance).

The *St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology* is under the presidency of Dr. Scott Hahn. Part of their mission is to be a “nonprofit research and educational institute that promotes life-transforming Scripture study from the heart of the Church. The Center serves clergy and laity, students and scholars, with research and study tools — from books and publications to multimedia and online programming.” Hahn has done as much as anyone in our generation to spread Biblical literacy among Catholics. He is a trusted and important theologian. Please visit <https://stpaulcenter.com>.

Catholic Productions states as part of their goal: “We want people to recognize that our Catholic Faith has the power to change lives, that it has historical roots that only deepen its mysterious charm and beauty, and that its truth is captivating when presented by those passionately in love with Jesus Christ and well versed in Scripture and the Catholic Church’s Tradition, from which Scripture arose.” Some of their featured teachers are Dr. Michael Barber, Dr. John Bergsma, and Dr. Brant Pitre. The founders of the site prefer to stay behind the scenes, giving attention to the Faith — this is admirable. Please visit <https://catholicproductions.com>.



St. Irenaeus Ministries is directed by Mr. Theodore Janiszewski. The website states: “Since its inception in 1993, the *St. Irenaeus* ministry has tried to follow the example of our namesake in evangelizing and teaching, equipping and encouraging the faithful, so that today’s men and women can better explore the fullness of the Catholic faith and come to know more profoundly the love and life of God in Jesus Christ.” Their audios and videos are scholarly and entertaining. Please visit <https://siministries.org>.

The *Classical Theism* podcast, overseen by Mr. John DeRosa, offers a variety of topics. The website states: “On the show, we showcase Catholic philosophers, theologians, scientists, apologists, historians, priests, and others as we dive into different aspects of Catholicism in general and *classical theism* in particular. While some view Catholicism as outdated or childish, it is eminently reasonable and defensible in our modern age.” I have had the privilege of being a guest several times (to discuss both the Gospel of St. Matthew and Gospel of St. John). Please visit <https://www.classicaltheism.com>.

Sensum Fidelium is lead by Mr. Steve Cunningham. He says: “I started doing this when the movie ‘Greater Glory’ was in theatres. I wanted to help promote the movie and I knew of a sermon that went into great detail about this event and figured that if I put it together into a video that may draw more interest to the movie... Since then it has been a daily thing to put a video together to help educate the faithful.” The site is invaluable. Please visit <https://sensusfidelium.com>.

Future columns will suggest more online sources. They are a tremendous asset for Biblical Studies. Modern technology, with all its faults, can be used well.

“Prophets summoned kings and peasants to repentance, cursed politicians who led Israel into idolatrous alliances with foreign powers, and blessed the people with the hope of a messianic ‘day of the Lord’”

writes the Norbertine Alfred McBride (*Fr. McBride’s Guide to the Bible*, p. 119). The prophets are key figures from the plan of Sacred History.

A “prophet,” linked to the word *nābī*, was a man commissioned to proclaim God’s message to the world. Abraham (cf. Gen 20:7) and Moses (cf. Dt 18:15) are called prophets. There was also a kind of guild of prophets (cf. 2 Ki 2:3-7; 4:1). Not all these men composed books (e.g., Elijah and Elisha). Those who wrote larger works are designated “major prophets”: this is Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. The rest are “minor prophets,” but of no less value (cf. X. Léon-Dufour, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Updated Second Edition*, pp. 468-472; P. Heinisch, *History of the Old Testament*, pp. 281-300; W. Mounce, gen. ed., *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, pp. 544-545).

The prophetic office placed an emphasis on three main teachings. Firstly, an interior spirituality; with its demand for one’s heart to love and obey God. Secondly, the call for unique worship; with a railing against idolatry. Thirdly, the exhortation for justice; giving God, and then men, their proper due (cf. N. Flanagan, *Salvation History: An Introduction to Biblical Theology*, pp. 68-72).

The above subjects may be spread over four kinds of oracles. There is indictment: that which has been done wrong. There is judgment: God’s response to the offenses. There is instruction: for doing, for thinking, and for acting. There is aftermath: God’s plans which proceed His judgment (cf. J. Walton, et al., *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, p. 583).

Some aspects of the prophetic epoch are disputed among reliable scholars (cf. G. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp. 327-447; J. Bergsma and B. Pitre, *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible I:721-972*; H. Schumacher, *A Handbook of Scripture Study II:172-241*). Here are the writing prophets, the approximate dates for their ministries, and their main audiences (cf. Archer, pp. 346-347):

Pre-Exilic Prophets

Obadiah (848 B.C.) to Judah
Joel (830—810 B.C.) to Judah
Jonah (c. 800 B.C.) to Nineveh
Amos (c. 760—757 B.C.) to Israel
Hosea (756—725 B.C.) to Israel
Isaiah (740—680 B.C.) to Judah
Micah (735—690 B.C.) to Judah and Israel
Nahum (c. 640 B.C.) to Judah
Zephaniah (640—630 B.C.) to Judah
Jeremiah (626—580 B.C.) to Judah
Habakkuk (608—597 B.C.) to Judah

Exilic Prophets

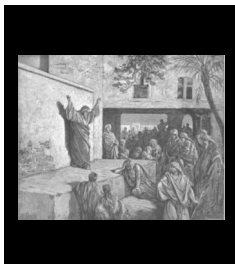
Daniel (605—530 B.C.) to Judah
Baruch (connected to Jeremiah) to Judah
Ezekiel (592—570 B.C.) to Judah

Post-Exilic Prophets

Zechariah (520—475 B.C.) to Judah
Haggai (520 B.C.) to Judah
Malachi (c. 435 B.C.) to Judah

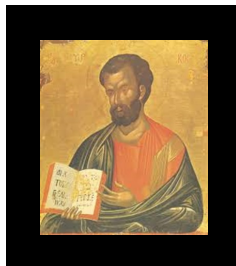
Fr. Marius Chaine describes this essential period from the Old Testament:

“Their souls on fire, the prophets were God’s heralds to the world, the champions of His kingdom, of His glory. They announced and prepared the way for the coming of our Lord. They were defenders of the lowly. Their teaching has a value which has not become outdated; it remains animated with the breath of the Spirit of God. What it tells us of the greatness of God, of His providence, of the moral life, of social justice is pertinent in every age” (*God’s Heralds: A Guide to the Prophets of Israel*, p. x).



“The Gospel, we have said, is God’s book written for human souls. Therein souls are trained in the divine Science of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, there they will find Life, true Life, Life unending, Life daily widening and increasing in perfection unto Life everlasting...” exclaimed Canon Alfred Weber in *The Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (pp. 8-9). This is an incentive to read, study, and meditate on the inspired treatises from the Four Evangelists. Thus, another preview: for the Markan Gospel. Many sources from the earlier Matthean preview will be put into service (cf. *Veritas Scripturae*, vol. 12, p. 11).

St. Mark's Gospel consists of 16 chapters, 678 verses, and about 15,171 words (cf. R. Boyd, *World's Bible Handbook*, p. 404). The book was composed before A.D. 70, for mainly a Gentile audience in Rome (cf. A. Fuentes, *A Guide to the Bible*, pp. 177-181 and A. Wikenhauser, *New Testament Introduction*, pp. 155-173). St. Mark, the author, is among the “Apostolic men” in Acts 12:12-25; 13:4-13; 15:36-41; Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 23-24; and 1 Peter 5:13. Mark was a cousin of Barnabas (cf. Col 4:10), a key person in Acts 4—15. Mark's mother, Mary, was a faithful Christian; believers used to meet at her house (cf. Acts 12:12). The author may be the “young man” (*neaniskos*) who fled at Our Lord's arrest (cf. Mk 14:51). Mark had a Jewish name, *Yohannan* (“Yahweh is gracious”), and a Greek name, *Markos*, tied to the Latin, *markus* (“large hammer”). Tradition confirms Markan authorship in St. Irenaeus, St. Papias, Tertullian, Origen, St. Clement of Alexandria via Eusebius, St. Augustine, and St. Jerome (citations are given in *Veritas Scripturae* 1.2; 1.3; 1.5; 1.6; 2.1; 2.2; and 2.3). Fr. Thomas Bird points out: “From these authorities we learn that St. Mark's Gospel is St. Peter's teaching in writing” (*Scripture Textbooks for Catholic Schools: A Study of the Gospels*, p. 5).



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

- The Beginning Message (Mk 1:1-13)
- Ministry in Galilee (Mk 1:14—9:50)
- From Galilee to Jerusalem (Mk 10:1-52)
- Last Week in Jerusalem (Mk 11:1—16:8)
- The Risen Christ (Mk 16:9-20).

Notice that Holy Week of Mark 11:1—16:8 fills over a third of the book (cf. H. Lindsell, *Harper Study Bible*, pp. 1492-1493).

Fr. Francis Spencer says: “The purpose of Mark's Gospel, as of Peter's preaching, was to prove the divinity and power of Christ, and so we find here special emphasis on the deeds and miracles of Our Lord” (*The New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, p. 102). These deeds and miracles include the famous pericopes of the paralytic lowered through a roof and healed (Mk 2:1-12); the stilling of a storm (Mk 4:35-41); the woman cured of a hemorrhage by touching the garment of the Divine Physician (Mk 5:25-34); the Transfiguration (Mk 9:2-10); the restoring of sight to Bartimaeus (Mk 10:46-52); the teaching about faith (Mk 11:22-26); and Jesus in Gethsemane (Mk 14:32-42). A trait of this action-packed Gospel is the frequent word “immediately” (*euthys*) in Mark 1:10, 12, 18, 20-21, 23, 29-30, 42; 2:8, 12; 3:6; 4:5, 15-17; 5:29-30, 42; 6:25, 27, 45, 50, 54; 7:25; 8:10; 9:15, 20, 24; 10:52; 11:2-3; 14:43, 72. A key theme in St. Mark: “For the Son of Man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mk 10:45).

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 Markan Gospel. Additional sources consulted: Dr. Donald Guthrie's *New Testament Introduction*, pp. 61-101; Dr. Mary Healy's *Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture: The Gospel of Mark*, pp. 17-26; and Msgr. John Steinmueller's *A Companion to Scripture Studies* III:65-85.

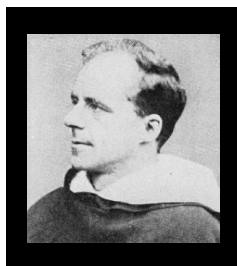
Book Recommendation (out-of-print):

The Catholic Student's "Aids" to the Study of the Bible I—V

Hugh Pope, O.P. *The Catholic Student's "Aids" to the Study of the Bible I—V*. London: Burns Oates & Washbourne / New York: P. J. Kenedy, 1926—1938. 402, 517, 424, 414, and 454 pages.

The Dominican Father Hugh Pope (1869-1946), later Monsignor, was a renowned Biblical scholar and teacher from England. His five-volume set on the Holy Scriptures reflects the outstanding work of a past era.

The tomes underwent revision. Prefaces and introductions disclose Pope's thinking. Here are some samples. Volume I: "The writer's sole aim has been to provide the ever-increasing number of Catholics who are interested in the Bible and Biblical studies with a practical *Introduction* to the greatest of all books" (p. vii). Volume II, in part, says: "Yet, like the Church and her critics, the Bible still survives. Copies and editions still flow from the printing presses; the missionary who has probably been taught little but destructive criticism of it, still uses it; the devout still find in it their inspiration and 'the comfort of the Scriptures'; the very men who maintain that the Bible is unreliable still trust it; those who question its Divine Authorship still base their teachings on it — Why? Because the Book of books compels their allegiance; because the Book itself is the greatest refutation of the pronouncements of its critics" (p. viii). Volume III reads: "We often hear it said that if such mighty scholars as Origen, Jerome, Chrysostom, and Augustine had had the knowledge of the East and of the Bible that we now have, they would endorse the critical views which now hold the field. But surely they would have applied to those conclusions two acid tests: Do those conclusions conflict with the fundamental doctrine that the Bible is the Word of God and therefore absolutely true? And: What has the Church of God to say to these views?" (pp. xii-xiii). Volume IV notes: "Most reviewers of Biblical works are them-



selves Biblical professors and are naturally inclined to consider a book from the standpoint of the professor rather than from that of the student. I have tried, then, to meet the needs of both professor and student by providing for the latter in the text what he may be presumed to want, while the notes, the small print and the Bibliographies may be of use to those who have to teach and who therefore demand more..." (p. xiv). Volume V remarks: "But though the New Testament itself is the tiniest of volumes, the same cannot be said of the literature it has produced. Year by year the torrent grows in volume, so that every writer is — or ought to be — ashamed to add to it! Yet in the end each man is driven back to the tiny volume itself; it displaces all commentaries when a man would view his own soul 'as in a mirror'" (p. ix).

The opening three works examine the Old Testament: Volume I covers the allied subjects for Biblical Studies, Volume II includes an overview of each book, and Volume III contains related background matters. The final two books examine the New Testament: Volume IV addresses the Four Gospels, with Volume V comprising the remainder of the New Testament. Here is a sample chapter in Volume IV: "Jewish Life in the Time of Christ" discusses "The 'Sects' Among the Jews," "The Pharisees," "The Sadducees," "The Scribes," "The Sanhedrin," "The Synagogue," "The Proselytes," "The Dispersion," "The Publicans," "Moneys in Use in New Testament Times," "The Tribute," and "The Temple."

As expected, a collection published before World War II will require supplementation. As well, a writer of a set that spans over 2200 pages will not please everyone with all his utterances. No matter: one has in Fr. Pope's *The Catholic Student's "Aids" to the Study of the Bible* reliable scholarship, casting light upon the Word of God, from a loyal son of Holy Mother Church.

Book Recommendation (in-print):

Learning Biblical Hebrew: Reading for Comprehension — An Introductory Grammar

Guest columnist: Andrew J. Montanaro, Ph.D.

Karl V. Kutz and Rebekah L. Josberger.
Learning Biblical Hebrew: Reading for Comprehension — An Introductory Grammar. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018. 418 pages with appendices.

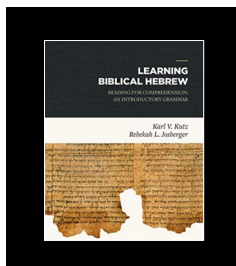
Kutz' and Josberger's *Learning Biblical Hebrew* is an extremely helpful grammar born out of a pedagogy that is sensitive both to the historical development of the Hebrew language and to its vibrancy and dynamism. It is designed so the student of Hebrew may “*know it like one knows a person rather than learn about it like one studies facts*” (p. xxiii, italics in original).

The most unique feature of this grammar is its focus on the prehistory of biblical Hebrew, especially the vowel shifts experienced by Hebrew and sister languages. The upshot of this historical approach is that students not only will be able to decipher Hebrew words in their various forms but also to understand and even to anticipate them. This approach therefore decreases the necessity of memorizing paradigms. As the authors observe: “*students retain more when their learning is based on understanding rather than rote memory,*” and they achieve this end “*by introducing advanced concepts in a manner that beginning students can understand and by reiterating and building on those concepts throughout their language learning*” (p. xxiii).

The Hebrew grammar is presented in 33 chapters, plus six appendices, which comprise the textbook proper. The material in *Learning Biblical Hebrew* naturally proceeds from the writing system (chapters

1-3), to nouns and adjectives (4-10), and finally to verbs (11-33); with cogent explanations that are neither terse nor convoluted. A note on verbs helpfully appears in chapter 4 so that students can begin translating sentences as early as possible.

An accompanying workbook (sold separately) includes exercises and practice translations in the form of a graded reader. The translations are drawn from the Joseph section (Genesis 37-50) and the books of Ruth and Esther. The biblical text is modified only in the earlier lessons so as not to overburden students with an overabundance of new material in any one chapter. The stated objective is to get students translating biblical texts as early as possible.



In the course of study, using this grammar can yield a comfortably paced experience that avoids overload. Several chapters comprise instruction and tips on recognition rather than advancing new material. There are, for instance, chapters solely on the vowel changes in nouns and verbs. In addition to other such chapters (5, 9, 11, and 12), there is a full chapter (24) introducing “weak” verbs (i.e., verbs with troublesome consonants that affect spelling). Further, the wide margins, attractive typeface, and red subtitles facilitates ease of readings.

Learning Biblical Hebrew is excellent for the classroom or self-study. The companion, *Learning Biblical Hebrew Workbook: A Graded Reader with Exercises*, enhances the grammar book.

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).

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 (1) explain the various Bible study tools and academic resources; for individual research or study groups, (2) present studies from Scripture on specific books such as the Gospel of St. Luke, or general themes such as the Biblical roots of home-schooling, (3) promote the classic exegetical methods and insights from Tradition; with attention to the Church Fathers and St. Thomas Aquinas, and (4) defend the Magisterial doctrines of Biblical inspiration and inerrancy; the latter the main focus of the apostolate.

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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, 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).

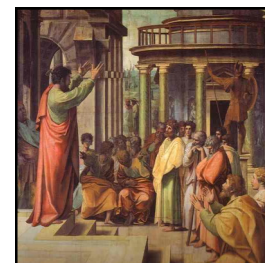
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Mr. Salvatore J. Ciresi, founder and director of the St. Jerome Biblical Guild, served two tours in the U.S. Marine Corps and is now employed in the aviation sector. He earned his M.A. in Theological Studies, with a Scripture concentration, from the Notre Dame Graduate School of Christendom College, where he serves on the 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) writer for a variety of publications. Ciresi resides with his wife and children in Virginia.

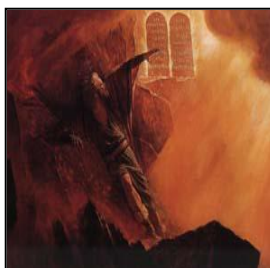


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