

2021

Annual Edition

Volume 13



[www.sjbg.me](http://www.sjbg.me)

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# Veritas Scripturae

## The Bulletin of the St. Jerome Biblical Guild



A publication that focuses upon the doctrines of Biblical inspiration and inerrancy, and related Scriptural knowledge, in light of Tradition and the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

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



### From the Director: Heeding the *Imitation of Christ*

St. Thomas à Kempis has left us simple but necessary wisdom in the opening page of his famous *Imitation of Christ*: “Let it then be our chief study to meditate on the life of Jesus Christ” (1.1.1). This small devotional book from the Fifteenth Century continues to speak to our age: a believer ought to read or ponder the four Gospels on a regular basis.

I have sorrow and shame when I recall the amount of wretched music lyrics and revolting movie dialogues I knew by heart during my misspent youth, while at the same time, ignorant of the Holy Scriptures. That is God’s time lost forever. Dear friends, please avoid such sins.

Search and reflect on one of the Gospels every day. All of us can devote about five minutes to the task. A parting counsel from the *Imitation*: “But he who would fully and feelingly understand the words of Christ, must study to make his whole life conformable to that of Christ” (1.1.2).

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:

## Leviticus 19:1-4

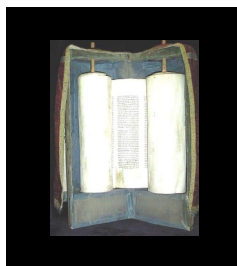
“And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Say to all the congregation of the people of Israel, You shall be holy; for I the LORD your God am holy. Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and you shall keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God. Do not turn to idols or make for yourselves molten gods: I am the LORD your God’” (Lev 19:1-4).

The book of Leviticus is the third work of Moses’ five books that make up the Pentateuch. Fr. Henri Cazelles suggests a plan for this Mosaic segment: Genesis reveals origins, Exodus treats of the release from Egypt, Leviticus focuses on ritual ceremonies, Numbers emphasizes the census lists, and Deuteronomy revisits the law of God (cf. A. Robert and A. Feuillet, et al., *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 68). Dr. Gordon J. Wenham states: “Leviticus used to be the first book that Jewish children studied in the synagogue. In the modern Church it tends to be the last part of the Bible anyone looks at seriously” (*The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Leviticus*, p. vii).

Leviticus was composed about 1445 B.C., at the Israelite camp at Mount Sinai (cf. L. Richards, *The Bible Reader’s Companion*, p. 76). This preceded the construction of the tabernacle (cf. Ex 40:34-35; Lev 1:1). The 27 chapters of Leviticus may be divided as 1—17 on sacrifices to approach God, and then 18—27 on sanctification for fellowship with God (cf. D. Murray, et al., *Every Catholic’s Guide to the Sacred Scriptures*, p. 113). Within the section on fellowship, consider Leviticus 19:1-4.

The pericope manifests two crucial points. Firstly, one sees the mediatorial role of Moses as a spokesman for God. Secondly, one realizes God’s uniqueness over His chosen people via the recurring expression “the LORD your God” (*y<sup>e</sup>hwāh ʾēlohēkhem*). Now, to the four verses.

Leviticus 19:1-2 stresses a key theme from the book: the holiness of God. Moreover, the followers of God must also be “holy” (*qōdhōshîm*). From a vocabulary aspect, it has been noted that “the word ‘holy’ occurs in this book of the Bible more often than in any other... If we concentrate exclusively on the Hebrew root *q-d-š*, we discover, using Mandelkern’s or Evan-Shoshan’s Hebrew concordances, that some form of this root, in adjectival, nominal, or verbal structure, appears 150 times in Leviticus...” (V. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, pp. 232-233). The first Pope carries forward this Leviticus holiness theme into 1 Peter 1:15-16. Moses, one could insist, gives some basis for sanctifying grace.



Leviticus 19:3 reiterates the Fourth Commandment, from Exodus 20:12 (repeated in Dt 5:16), to “revere” (*tīrā’û*) or honor one’s parents. This obligation is upheld in the New Covenant (cf. Mt 15:4; Lk 18:20; Eph 6:2). One must “keep my sabbaths” (*w<sup>e</sup>eth-shabb<sup>e</sup>thōthay tishmōrû*) as well; another principle of Leviticus reaffirmed in the later Testament’s “Lord’s Day” (cf. Acts 2:42; Heb 10:25; Rev 1:10). This is more evidence for the unity of both Testaments.

Leviticus 19:4 warns against “idols” (*ʾel-hā ʾēlîm*) — a regular temptation for fallen mankind. Fittingly, the same caveats are disclosed in the New Testament (cf. 1 Cor 10:14; 1 Jn 5:21). The book of Acts, at the nascent Catholic Church’s spreading of the Gospel, records a striking episode of St. Paul addressing this sin (Acts 17:16-33).

Leviticus, an inspired and inerrant work, should be read by all Catholics. A popular commentator says: “Leviticus is the book of worship. Sacrifice, ceremony, ritual, liturgy, instructions, washings, convocations, holy days, observances, conditions, and warnings crowd this book. All these physical exercises were given to teach spiritual truths” (J. McGee, *Thru the Bible* 1:321).

# Scripture Memorization and Exegesis from the New Testament:

## Colossians 3:12-17

“Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Col 3:12-17).

The book of Colossians is among the “Captivity Epistles” (with Ephesians, Philippians, and Philemon); composed at St. Paul’s first Roman imprisonment, about A.D. 61-63 (cf. A. Fuentes, *A Guide to the Bible*, p. 203; J. Holzner, *Paul of Tarsus*, p. 488; A. Wikenhauser, *New Testament Introduction*, p. 359). The city of Colossae, within the Lycus valley in the province of Asia Minor, received this Pauline tome.

The letter covers a variety of topics such as the Redemption (Col 1:13-14), Christology (Col 2:9), marriage (Col 3:18-21), and ecclesiastical governance (Col 4:16-17). Among this array of teachings are the equally important counsels for the interior life. It is interesting to consider that the Apostle Paul, who discusses some of the richest doctrines of the Catholic Faith, at the same time gives as much attention to the care of souls. One author notes: “St. Paul’s sacred words from ancient times cry out to an open heart. His writings bring the love of God into the lives of the faithful” (M. Briese, *St. Paul: Disciple, Teacher, Servant of Christ*, p. vii). This column will focus on the pericope of Colossians 3:12-17.



For starters, Colossians 3:12 gives a string of characteristics found in genuine believers: “compassion” (*splanchna oiktirmou*), “kindness” (*chrēstotēta*), “lowliness” (*tapeinophrosynēn*), “meekness” (*prautēta*) and “patience” (*makrothymian*). One who strives for sanctity learns that these traits stand or fall together. Their exercise leads to forbearance towards others.

Next, we find the exhortation that we must be “forgiving” (*charizomenoi*) as the Lord has granted us pardon. St. Paul hearkens to the petition from “The Lord’s Prayer,” taken from Matthew 6:12. Forgiveness is a trademark of the Gospel.

As well, Christians are told to “put on love” (*tēn agapēn*) which then “binds everything together” (*syndesmos*). This is a renowned Pauline theme; see 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. One thinks of St. John: “He who does not love does not know God; for God is love” (1 Jn 4:8). Likewise, the Master: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35).

Moving ahead, there is St. Paul’s beautiful command for the “word of Christ” (*logos tou Christou*) to “dwell in you” (*enoikeitō en hymin*). Furthermore, this is to be done “richly” (*plousiōs*). Here, the Apostle draws a parallel between the Holy Ghost residing in the soul and God’s sayings residing in the intellect. Such wisdom may even come to the Christian via “psalms” (*psalmois*), “hymns” (*hymnois*), and “spiritual songs” (*ōdais pneumatikais*). Sacred music has a role in the life of the Christian.

Lastly, we are encouraged to “do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus” (*panta en onomati kyriou Iēsou*). Bernardine à Piconio explains: “Do all *through Christ*, as your mediator and pontiff; *with Christ*, as your head; *in Christ*, in his spirit, motive, and intention” (*An Exposition of the Epistles of St. Paul* II:409, italics in original).



*Veritas Scripturae* 4.3 (back in 2012) discussed “The Instrumentality of the Human Authors” in the regular column on the Church Fathers. This present column will give further considerations to the sacred writers; as God acts upon them during the charism of Biblical inspiration.

Fr. Michael Schmaus provides us a somewhat recent source with *Dogma I: God in Revelation*. Part of his book, from a multi-volume set, examines Biblical inspiration and related matters.

Schmaus writes: “It is important to realize that according to the teaching of the Church inspiration extends not only to religious truth in the narrower sense but also to everything which the human author really wanted to say” (p. 185). Briefly, that is the perennial teaching. Inspiration applies to salvific and non-salvific matters (as does inerrancy). One need only to make the usual and proper distinctions.

The treatment continues: “Inspiration not only affects the writer personally but also influences what he writes. As far as the inspired writer is concerned, he need not be directly conscious of the fact that he is being inspired. We would, however, reduce inspiration to an empty word if we did not see that it causes a change in his mental activity. It produces in him a new horizon of consciousness, opens new perspectives and associations of knowledge, shows him the place of the individual in the whole, and stimulates him to decide to communicate these findings of his to others by means of the written word” (p. 185). The sacred writers truly engage their intellects and wills during the composition of the divine books. The authors, by God’s grace, do, in fact, “work at it.”

The distinguished theologian proceeds: “From the fourth century on, principally in order to defend the Old Testament against the Manichean heresy of the demonic origin of the Old Testament, it became customary to refer to the Holy Spirit as the author of Scripture. The human writer is viewed, in this terminology, as a ‘tool’ of the Holy Spirit. Thus the same relationship is seen to obtain between the divine and the human author which is expressed in scholastic philosophy by the distinction between principal and secondary cause” (p. 188).

“It is important to realize that according to the teaching of the Church inspiration extends not only to religious truth...”

Relevant testimonies from the Fathers which describe the sacred writers as “tools” or “instruments” come from men such as Athanasius of Athens, St. Theophilus of Antioch, and St. Hippolytus of Rome (cf. *Veritas Scripturae* 4.3, p. 4). This terminology undergoes an organic development in later theologians.

Schmaus moves ahead: “In this case, if we are to obtain an accurate understanding of inspiration, it is very necessary to interpret correctly the concept of secondary or instrumental cause. If this terminology is used, attention must be paid to the fact that the terms ‘principal cause’ and ‘instrumental cause’ are to be understood analogously; that, in particular, the human author does not operate like a secretary taking divine dictation. Such an idea leads, as can be seen from the theology of the Reformation, to an almost mechanistic concept of verbal inspiration. Even though the Council of Trent speaks of ‘dictating,’ an understanding of the analogous sense of the term is not lacking...” (pp. 188-189). “Dictation” is an appropriate description, used in Trent’s *Decree on the Canonical Scriptures* (1546), Vatican I’s *Dei Filius* 2 (1870), and Pope Leo XIII’s *Providentissimus Deus* II.D.3a (1893). It is a mechanical dictation which is unacceptable. This kind renders the human authors practically lifeless.

Final observations: “In order to understand rightly what is meant here by the term ‘instrumental cause,’ we must note that the human author brings to the work his own initiative, his personality, his linguistic talents and limitations, his social background, his entire cultural horizon, to such an extent that what he writes is really his own work and shows all the peculiarities of his individuality. An inspired book is wholly God’s work and wholly that of the human author. Each of them acts in his own manner, God as God, man as a creature... In the last analysis we face here the impenetrable mystery which lies in the cooperation of God and man” (p. 189). The scholastic terms throw needed light on the special grace of Biblical inspiration. Such language points to the essential role of the human writers.

Perhaps some phrases of Schmaus could stand improvement. Overall, his work is an aid.

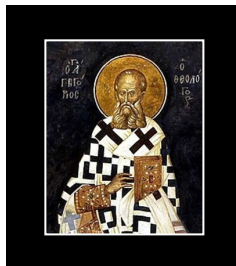
## The Church Fathers and Scripture:

### St. Gregory of Nazianzus on Assorted Subjects of Holy Writ

St. Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 326—389) is one of the three great “Cappadocian Fathers;” the other two are his friends St. Basil of Caesarea and St. Gregory of Nyssa (Basil’s sibling). St. Gregory of Nazianzus will be the focus in this column. It is said of this Gregory: “Not prolific but extraordinarily profound, he alone among the Fathers is given St. John’s title, the Divine, i.e., the Theologian” (W. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers* II:28).

St. Gregory wrote a number of poems to aid the beginning student of the Holy Bible. His poetry is also useful as a review for the advanced scholar. Here are selections taken from the *Popular Patristic Series, Number 46: St. Gregory of Nazianzus — Poems on Scripture* (B. Dunkle, trans.). The versification is here reformatted for easier reading.

“The Theologian” starts us off with a beautiful prayer for preparing to read and study the Scriptures. Here is an extract from *Poem* I.1.35: “Attend, O all-seeing Father of Christ, to these are petitions. Be gracious to your servant’s evening song; for I am one who sets his footstep on the sacred paths, who knows God to be the only self-generate among the living and Christ to be the king who wards off ills from mortals... Come now and tend to your servant’s soul with inspired accounts from the book of holiness and purity. For thus you might gaze on your servants of the truth proclaiming true life with a voice as high as heaven” (Dunkle, p. 35). This invocation helps instill a reverence for the Sacred Page. One is not picking up a cookbook or a check register. We must handle the Bible with due respect.



St. Gregory next speaks on apostolic authorship of the Gospels in *Poem* I.1.12, writing in part: “Matthew wrote the marvels of Jesus for the Jews. Mark for Italy, Luke for Greece, John, the great herald, heaven-haunting, wrote for all” (Dunkle, p. 39). This belief about the composition of the Gospels is reiterated for all four Evangelists. *Poem* I.1.20 says: “The marvels of the book of Matthew, just so many as Christ the king performed, mixed, in a mortal body” (Dunkle, p. 53). *Poem* I.1.21 has: “Mark wrote these miracles of God for the Ausonians, relying on Peter, the great servant of Christ” (Dunkle, p. 59). *Poem* I.1.22 notes: “Luke wrote these splendid miracles of God for Greece, relying on Paul, the great servant of Christ” (Dunkle, p. 61). *Poem* I.1.23 reads: “Now in the sacred book of John you will find few miracles, but many words of Christ the king” (Dunkle, p. 65). These remarks about the specific writers of the Gospels agree with the Patristic tradition. Gregory knows nothing of an “early faith community” who “group-authored” the Good News.

The Cappadocian, lastly, highlights God’s Word for the interior life. Revisiting *Poem* I.1.12, an earlier part states: “O let your mind and tongue dwell among divine phrases. For God has given this reward for the effort, just a little light to see something hidden, or, what’s best, to be spurred on by the pure God’s awesome commands, or third, that by these concerns you may draw your heart from earthly things. And that your mind might not be stolen by strange books...” (Dunkle, p. 37). St. Gregory of Nazianzus stresses that Holy Writ will form our minds for Christ.

## St. Thomas Aquinas and Revelation:

### Commentary on Luke 1:28

St. Thomas Aquinas (d. 1273) gave a series of 59 sermons during Lent, in the church of San Domenico in Naples, in 1273. The preaching was aimed at the common folk. Part of the material was directed to the “Hail Mary” prayer, based upon the Gospel of St. Luke. Here are some extracts, for Luke 1:28, found in *St. Thomas Aquinas: The Three Greatest Prayers*, reissued by Sophia Institute Press (background info and quotes taken from pp. ix, 163-167).

Look at Luke 1:28, when the heavenly messenger Gabriel visits the Blessed Virgin, as rendered in the *Douay Rheims Bible* (Haydock edition of 1859): “And the Angel being come in, said to her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women.” The *New Jerusalem Bible* (1985), feebly, says: “He went in and said to her, ‘Rejoice, you who enjoy God’s favour! The Lord is with you.’”

Now, the Angelic Doctor’s observations (reformatted and slightly adapted for readability). Preaching about the action of Gabriel, Aquinas notes, in part, “in earlier times it was no small event when angels appeared to men, or men paid reverence to them, such a thing being recorded as deserving of great praise. Hence it is mentioned in praise of Abraham that he gave hospitality to angels and paid them reverence. But it was unheard of that an angel should show reverence to a human being, until one of them greeted the Blessed Virgin reverently, saying, *Hail*. In ancient times, reverence was shown by men to angels, but not by angels to men, because angels are greater than man...” This scene of the Annunciation is familiar to Catholics. But it is stunning: heaven itself lays a foundation for hyperdulia.



Thomas then discusses grace in the life of the Mother of God, which surpasses even the angels. This is considered in three respects.

First, her interior life: “She was full of grace as regards her soul, in which dwelt all the plenitude of grace. For God’s grace is given for two purposes: the performance of good deeds and the avoidance of evil. As regards both, the Blessed Virgin received grace in the most perfect degree, since after Christ she was free from sin more than any other saint.” This point helps justify the title “Immaculate Mary.”

Second, Mary of Nazareth’s physical life: “The Blessed Virgin was full of grace as regards the overflow of grace from her soul into her flesh or body. For while it is a great thing in the saints to be so endowed with grace that their souls are holy, the soul of the Blessed Virgin was so full of grace that it overflowed into her flesh, fitting it for the conception of God’s Son.” This point leads to the title “Ark of the New Covenant.”

Third, Our Lady’s influence upon men: “So full of grace was the Blessed Virgin, that it overflows onto all mankind. It is, indeed, a great thing that any one saint has so much grace that it is conducive to the salvation of many; but it is most wondrous to have so much grace as to suffice for the salvation of all mankind. Thus it is in Christ and in the Blessed Virgin.” This point gives credence for the title “Mediatrice of All Graces.”

The relevant section from *The Three Greatest Prayers* is about five pages. Aquinas’ preaching, one discovers, has its roots in both Testaments. This is “Biblical Theology” done properly.

## The Magisterium Speaks:

### Vatican II's *Dei Verbum* 11: The First Paragraph

This column continues to examine Vatican II's *Dei Verbum* (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation) from 1965. The relevant section is Number 11, which discusses both inspiration and inerrancy. Recall that the previous bulletin gave the official Latin text and two common English translations for this section. The complete and official Latin text is accessible in hardcopy in Fr. Norman Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* II:971-981.

For now, consider the first paragraph of *Dei Verbum*, Number 11 (the second paragraph will be analyzed in future bulletins). Here, again, is the popular translation from Fr. Austin Flannery, gen. ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (pp. 756-757), including **footnotes**: “The divinely revealed realities, which are contained and presented in the text of sacred Scripture, have been written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. For Holy Mother Church relying on the faith of the apostolic age, accepts as sacred and canonical the books of the Old and the New Testaments, whole and entire, with all their parts, on the grounds that, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn. 20:31; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; 3:15-16), they have God as their author, and have been handed on as such to the Church herself.<sup>1</sup> To compose the sacred books, God chose certain men who, all the while he employed them in this task, made full use of their powers and faculties<sup>2</sup> so that, though he acted in them and by them,<sup>3</sup> it was as true authors that they consigned to writing whatever he wanted written, and no more.<sup>4</sup>

Section 11 reaffirms the orthodox teaching for both Biblical inspiration and inerrancy. This first paragraph on inspiration sets down some essentials for the second on inerrancy (that paragraph, we'll see later, has some regrettable wording). For now, three observations on the first paragraph.



Firstly, the document says inspiration is a teaching connected to the Apostolic era (with the assumption that divine inspiration was operative in the pre-Apostolic period). This historical fact is supported with a string of Scriptural passages: John 20:31; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-21; and 3:15-16. The Johannine text gives the reason for the inscripturation of the Gospel: “**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.**” The Pauline verse is the classic text on biblical inspiration that emphasizes God as the Divine Author. The two Petrine extracts are complements which testify to the human authors of the Sacred Page.

Secondly, this first paragraph of *Dei Verbum* 11 follows some language of the First Vatican Council's *Dei Filius* 2 (1870), cited in **footnote 1**, where this earlier council had described the sacredness and canonicity of both Testaments “**in their integrity and with all their parts.**” Although not cited in this footnote, other magisterial documents use similar phraseology: Trent's *Decree on the Canonical Scriptures* (1546); and Pope Leo XIII's *Providentissimus Deus* II.D.3a (1893). Thus, Biblical inspiration may be styled as plenary, applying to Holy Writ in general, and styled as verbal, applying to the words in particular (cf. G. Smith, ed., *The Teaching of the Catholic Church* I:177). That is a crucial point: in Sacred History, inspiration applies to words and sayings as much as to deeds and events (cf. G. Mansini, *Sacra Doctrina Series: Fundamental Theology*, pp. 10-14).

Thirdly, the human writers are called “real authors” (Latin: *veri auctores*). Observe they used their natural abilities, elevated for the service of God — grace building on nature. Hence, *Dei Verbum* maintains the traditional distinction of dual authorship.

Next issue: the divisive second paragraph.



## The Pontifical Biblical Commission:

### The *Responses* of 1915 and 1933

The Pontifical Biblical Commission's 1915 pronouncement is given the title, "On the *Parousia* or the Second Coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ," in C. Louis, ed., *Rome and the Study of Scripture*, pages 136-137. The *Response* appears in three parts (reedited and reformatted for clarity):

"1. Whether to solve the difficulties which occur in the Epistles of St. Paul and of other Apostles, where the *Parousia*, as it is called, or the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is spoken of, it is permitted to the Catholic exegete to assert that the Apostles, although under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost they teach no error, nevertheless express their own human views, into which error or deception can enter.  
Answer: In the negative.

2. Whether, keeping before one's eyes the genuine idea of the Apostolic Office and of St. Paul's undoubted fidelity to the teaching of the Master; likewise, the Catholic dogma regarding the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures, whereby all that the sacred writer asserts, enunciates, suggests, must be held to be asserted, enunciated, suggested by the Holy Ghost; also, weighing the texts of the Apostle's Epistles, considered in themselves, which are before all in harmony with the speech of the Lord Himself, it is meet to affirm that the Apostle Paul in his writings certainly said nothing which is not in perfect harmony with that ignorance of the time of the *Parousia* which Christ Himself proclaimed to be men's portion.  
Answer: In the affirmative.

3. Whether, attention being paid to the Greek phrase, *hēmeis hoi zōntes hoi perileipomenoi*, also the explanation of the Fathers being weighed, especially that of St. John Chrysostom, who was highly versed both in his country's language and in the Pauline Epistles, is it lawful to reject as farfetched and destitute of solid foundation, the interpretation traditional in the Catholic schools — also retained the Reformers of the Sixteenth Century themselves — which explains the words of St. Paul (1 Thess 4:15-17) without in any wise implying the affirmation of a *Parousia* so imminent that the Apostle added himself and his readers to those of the faithful who should survive to meet Christ.  
Answer: In the negative."

This text will be revisited in a later bulletin.

The Commission's 1933 pronouncement has the title, "On the False Interpretation of Two Texts," (Louis, pp. 137-138). The two part *Response* (reformatted for clarity):

"1. Whether, especially considering the authentic interpretation of Ss. Peter and Paul, Princes of the Apostles (Acts 2:24-33; 13:35-37), a Catholic may interpret the words of Psalm 15:10-11, 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; nor wilt thou give thy holy one to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life,' as if the sacred author had not spoken of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
Answer: in the negative.

2. Whether one may assert that the words of Jesus Christ — Matthew 16:26, 'What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul' and Luke 9:25, 'What is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself?' — do not refer, in their literal sense, to the eternal salvation of the soul, but only to the temporal life of man, notwithstanding the meaning of the words themselves and their context, as also the unanimous interpretation of Catholics.  
Answer: In the negative."



Here are some particulars in view of the two *Responses*. The Biblical Commission, established under Pope Leo XIII in 1902, issued its first reply in 1905 ("On the Tacit Questions Contained in Holy Scripture"). The last reply, following a question and answer format, is the document from 1933. The 1915 and 1933 *Responses* have the longest gap between replies: 18 years. Between this interval came Pope Benedict XV's 1920 encyclical, *Spiritus Paraclitus* ("On the Fifteenth Centenary of the Death of St. Jerome").

After 1933, texts of varying authority came from the Commission. Notable is the letter to Cardinal Emmanuel Suhard, from 1948, "Concerning the Time of Documents of the Pentateuch and Concerning the Literary Form of the Eleven Chapters of Genesis."



## Addressing Bible Difficulties:

### Hebrews 9:1-5 and Items of Worship

Hebrews 9:1-5 given in the *Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition* (1965, 1966) states: “Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary. For a tent was prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence; it is called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain stood a tent called the Holy of Holies, having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, which contained a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.”

For comparison, the *Knox Bible* (1954) says: “The former covenant, to be sure, had its own ceremonial observances, its own earthly sanctuary. There was an outer tabernacle, which contained the lamp-stand and the table and the loaves set out before God; sanctuary was the name given to this; and then, beyond the second veil, the inner sanctuary, as it is called, with the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant, gilded all round. In the ark rested the golden urn with the manna in it, Aaron’s staff that budded, and the tablets on which the covenant was inscribed; above were the Cherubim, heralds of the divine glory, spreading their wings over the throne of mercy. We have no time to treat of these more particularly.”

A major theme throughout Hebrews 6—10 is the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old Alliance. St. Paul (the substantial author per the Biblical Commission’s *Response* of 1914) argues the death of Christ is a far more efficacious offering than the earlier rituals from the Old Testament period. Among these chapters, the worship at the tabernacle in the wilderness (which preceded the Solomonic temple) is brought into the discussion.

Two difficulties arise from the pericope of Hebrews 9:1-5. First, there is the location of the “altar of incense.” Second, there are the items within the “ark of the covenant.”

Consider the first matter on the position of the “altar” (*thymiatērion*). Exodus 30:6 puts it in the Holy Place, in front of the curtain that is before the Holy of Holies. However, the Apostle appears to situate the altar within the “Holy of Holies” (*Hagia Hagion*). One solution is offered by the connection of the altar with the Feast Day of the Atonement. Leviticus 16:12-13, 34 states the high priest, once per year, was to take coals from the altar to burn incense within the Holy of Holies. Hence, association rather than location is the point of Hebrews 9:4. In other words, St. Paul refers to the altar’s liturgical function during the Atonement; not to the altar’s position in the Holy Place (cf. J. Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions*, p. 305). Dr. Craig Blomberg notes: “It is hard to imagine any author as steeped in the Old Testament as the author of Hebrews not knowing that the altar of incense was in the court immediately outside the holy of holies...” (*B&H Studies in Christian Apologetics: The Historical Reliability of the New Testament*, p. 476).



Next, there is the second issue about the contents inside the “ark of the covenant” (*kibōton tēs diathēkēs*). Exodus 16:34 says the container of manna was placed before the ark, and Numbers 17:10 speaks likewise about Aaron’s staff. Hebrews 9:4, however, puts both the “urn” (*stamnōs*) and the “rod” (*rhabdos*) within the ark. Dr. Philip Edgcumbe Hughes responds: “It would at least seem reasonable to suppose that if the urn and the rod were originally placed in front of the ark, yet subsequently, for the sake of convenience (for example, when carrying the ark from one place to another), they were placed inside it” (*A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 315). This response also puts in proper perspective verses such as 1 Kings 8:9 and 2 Chronicles 5:10, which does state the ark contained only the two tables of stone (i.e., the Ten Commandments). Hebrews 9:4, then, it appears, is mentioning the time in the desert previous to the Solomonic Temple. Thus, the wilderness period, on occasion, had the items in the mobile ark; whereas the fixed Temple did not (cf. W. Arndt, *Bible Difficulties and Seeming Contradictions*, p. 160).

“It is impossible to give exact figures about the growth of the Church in the Roman Empire before the empire itself began to dissolve. Within three hundred years of its beginning on Pentecost Sunday the Church had grown so much that it is estimated that there may have been about 1750 bishops (heads of local Christian communities) within the empire. It has also been said that by the time of the Emperor Diocletian, at the beginning of the fourth century, the number of Christians within the empire may have been between six and ten million,” says Fr. Martin Healy in his book, *The Whole Story: God and Man through the Ages* (p. 562). One place of interest from the description above, for the study of Biblical geography, is the island of Crete. This locale is related to St. Paul in the book of Acts. For now, consider Crete as a landmass.

Crete is situated in the Mediterranean Sea, approximately 170 miles south of the mainland of Greece. The island is about 156 miles in length and 35 miles in width. Crete is the largest Greek isle (and fourth largest in the Mediterranean). The locality of Crete came under Roman rule in 67 B.C. By the time of the New Testament, Crete had a significant Jewish population per Acts 2:11 (cf. W. Kaiser, gen. ed., *NIV Archaeological Study Bible*, p. 1972).

The island is about equidistant from Europe, Asia and Africa. A stepping stone between the continents, Crete’s distinct mountain shapes may have assisted ancient sailors in setting courses to the isle’s harbors. Earthquakes have altered its coastline (cf. J. Pendlebury, *The Archaeology of Crete*, pp. 1-3).



The Old Testament has one reference to the island of Crete in 1 Maccabees 10:67. Crete was also called “Caphtor” in Deuteronomy 2:23; Jeremiah 47:4; and Amos 9:7 (cf. J.D. Douglas, et al., *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary* I:248). Genesis 10:14 and 1 Chronicles 1:12 link Caphtor with the Philistines (cf. A. Robert and A. Tricot, et al., *Guide to the Bible* II:168-170).

The New Testament mentions Crete in Acts 27:7-21. This is an extract from St. Paul’s voyage to Rome. The Apostle sailed under the southern part of Crete, and one finds references to its sites via Salmone (Acts 27:7), Fair Havens (Acts 27:8), Lasea (Acts 27:8), Phoenix (Acts 27:12), and the connected atoll Cauda (Acts 27:16). There is also the Pauline letter to Titus with respect to Crete. St. Paul labored there after his release from Roman captivity (cf. Acts 28:14-30). Later, he left the young bishop Titus on the island to “amend what was defective” (Tit 1:5). Titus had been the Apostle’s “child in a common faith” (Tit 1:4), and now was to guard the Cretan flock (cf. Tit 1:13; 2:1; 3:10).

Dr. David Marshall ends the column: “Crete certainly had an importance in the ancient world which it does not have today. Homer had referred to ‘Crete of the hundred cities’. From his days in Tarsus, Paul would have known of the importance and riches of populous Crete. Wherever he went he must have considered the ‘gospel-potential’ of an area. And when the ship was at anchor in the bay of Fair Havens, he must have thought of the imperative of bringing Christ to the Cretans...” (*Footprints of Paul*, p. 121).

### The Baptism of the Son of God

The Synoptic Gospels disclose the God-man's baptism (cf. Mt 3:13-17; Mk 1:9-11; Lk 3:21-22). St. John's Gospel mentions the event after the fact (cf. Jn 1:31-34). All the chronicles show the ministries of John the Baptizer and the Redeemer are intertwined via Divine Providence. Here are the accounts:

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented Him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness.' Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, He went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on Him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased'" (Mt 3:13-17).

"In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when He came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, 'Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased'" (Mk 1:9-11).

"Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, 'Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased'" (Lk 3:21-22).



The scene takes place at the Jordan River, followed by the temptations in the wilderness (cf. Mt 4:1-11; Mk 1:12-13; Lk 4:1-13). The baptism must have been a marvelous sight to those who were at the actual event. St. Jerome (d. 420) suggest three reasons this action was undertaken by the Son of God. First, so as man, He might satisfy with humility all justice owed to the law. Second, so that He would confirm the provisional role of John's baptism. Third, so that Christ would sanctify the waters, via the Spirit's later arrival, for subsequent baptisms for Christians (cf. *Commentary on Matthew* 1.3.13 in M. Simonetti, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* 1a:51).

Another observation on the significance of the Master's baptism comes from Père Henri Didon's classic, *The Life of Jesus Christ*. The Dominican notes: "This act inaugurated the public life of Jesus, revealed his nature, his divine calling, all his destiny and the power which was to lead him" (p. 38). The "Hidden Life" of about three decades had come to its end.

The last matter for consideration is the revelation of the Blessed Trinity at the scene. One reads in the Lukan Gospel a "voice came from heaven" (*phōnēn ex ouranou genesthai*) for the Father in Luke 3:22; "Jesus" (*Iēsou*) naturally for the Son in Luke 3:21; and of course "the Holy Spirit" (*to nouma to hagion*) in Luke 3:22. St. Augustine (d. 430) says the following: "Here the recognition of the Trinity is conveyed to us so plainly that it hardly leaves any room for doubt or hesitation" (*Sermon* 2.1 in Simonetti, 1a:54).

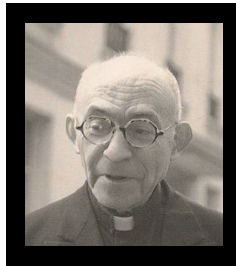
## Book Recommendation (out-of-print):

### *An Introduction to the History of Exegesis III: Saint Augustine*

Bertrand de Margerie. *An Introduction to the History of Exegesis, Volume III: Saint Augustine*. Translated by Pierre de Fontnouvelle. Petersham: St. Bede's Publications, 1991, 155 pages with indices.

Fr. Bertrand de Margerie (1923-2003) was one of the last of the "old school" Jesuits in our epoch. Among his list of impressive publications is his trilogy which surveys Patristic hermeneutics on the Holy Bible. The set entails *An Introduction to the History of Exegesis I: The Greek Fathers*; *An Introduction to the History of Exegesis II: The Latin Fathers*; and *An Introduction to the History of Exegesis III: Saint Augustine*. Here is a brief review of the last volume on Augustine (A.D. 354-430).

A striking but fitting claim is made by de Margerie: "It was probably in 397, when he wrote *De Doctrina Christiana*, that Augustine first expressed clearly the fundamental principle which was to govern his entire exegetical undertaking: charity is the soul and the aim of all scripture" (p. 20). Then, some actual words from St. Augustine: "Whoever... thinks that he understands the divine scriptures or any part of them so that it does not build the double love of God and of our neighbor does not understand it at all" (p. 20). This may seem an obvious point to the believer. But it is common to pick up a tome on the Sacred Page, and find it is treated as if it were merely a piece of literature or historical record. True, the Bible is a writing and a chronicle. But it's more — the Good News of salvation. The interpretive rule of charity, emphasized by Augustine, counters such naturalism.



De Margerie's chapter titles are "The Infallible Scriptures of the One and Only Word: from the Letter that Kills to the Life-Giving Spirit," "Does Augustine's Moses Stand for Multiplicity in Unity?," "The Richness of Doctrinal Exegesis Developed by Augustine as a Writer and Preacher," and concludes with "Exegesis, History and Eucharist." The introduction by Fr. Allan Fitzgerald, and forward by Anne-Marie La Bonnadiere, will prime the reader. The book does require an attentive reading; the end-notes provide as many insights as the body of the text.

This volume would have benefitted by an analysis of the key Augustinian texts on the topic of Biblical inerrancy. Three pertinent works are *Epistle 28*; *Epistle 82*; and the *Letter to Faustus the Manichaean*. It is understood that de Margerie had limits to the extent of his study. Nonetheless, the entire set is valuable. This volume will be appreciated by the theologian and historian, as well as the Bible student.

De Margerie's preface contains some remarks that are a great closing for this column's modest review: "Holy Writ, a message from the celestial Jerusalem, the goal of our pilgrimage, calls on us to lead a godly life here below, the better to hasten, with the help of the scriptures, toward eternal life, when we shall no longer need them. In passing on to us, exiles from the earthly paradise, this message showing the way to the heavenly paradise, Augustine, by emphasizing that the scriptures are inspired and free from error, guarantees their congruence and allows us to find peace in their promise..." (pp. 1-2).



## Book Recommendation (in-print):

### *Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar: Fourth Edition*

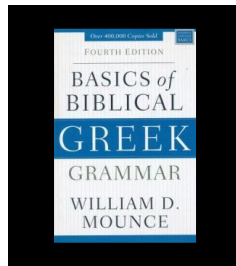
Guest columnist: Andrew J. Montanaro, Ph.D.

William D. Mounce. *Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar: Fourth Edition*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019, 544 pages with appendices.

Dr. William Mounce's *Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar* is designed to make learning Greek an enjoyable experience by focusing on the essentials, on the morphological patterns that explain "irregular" forms, and on the relevance of knowing Greek grammar for exegesis and ministry.

This grammar is divided into five parts. In the first part (chs. 1-4), Mounce introduces the Greek language. The second covers nouns and is divided into two sections (5-9, 10-14). The third, likewise divided into two sections (15-20, 21-25), covers indicative verbs. The fourth is devoted to participles (26-30). The fifth is on non-indicative moods and  $\mu\iota$  verbs (31-36). Mounce relates his reasons (p. xii) for not treating verbs until chapter 15, yet he has designed his grammar to be flexible so that the student eager for verbs can move the second section on nouns after the first section on indicative verbs.

This grammar includes many helpful features. Before each section Mounce provides a preview of the forthcoming topics so as to prime students. Most chapters include the following: an "Exegetical Insight" to demonstrate the relevance of the material, written by various New Testament scholars such as Daniel Wallace, Craig Blomberg, and Craig Keener; a review of English grammar; and a "Halftime Review" to help students keep a grasp on the essential details recently learned.



While each chapter is fairly short (the average is approximately 11 pages), they are filled with discussions geared toward morphological explanations of various Greek forms, whereby the "irregular" forms in Greek are shown, in many cases, to follow the same patterns as "regular" words. For instance, one of the chief contributions of this book is the approach to verbs that is taken. Mounce discusses the distinction between "root" and "stem," and he argues that the aorist stem can be seen as the most regular since it more often than the present stem reflects the root of a verb. The benefit of this approach is that it reduces the amount of memorization required, and makes the process of learning Greek at once more thorough and more enjoyable.

Mounce's morphological focus sets his work apart from most other grammars. Mounce keys all words in his lexicon appendix to his *Morphology of Biblical Greek*, which is a worthy, though not necessary, companion to his grammar.

Finally, an additional feature which is not necessary for learning Greek but quite helpful, is that each chapter provides some advanced information either in sections marked as such or in the footnotes. Thus, *Basics of Biblical Greek* double-functions as a thorough grammar and a solid reference text.

This fourth edition includes modified explanations; updated in light of new advances in Greek linguistics. Among the many aids for purchase that complement Mounce's book are his boxed set of vocabulary cards, and laminated 4 page study guide.

**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 accomplish the following: (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 found within 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. The Guild is consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and Sacred Heart of Jesus. 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).

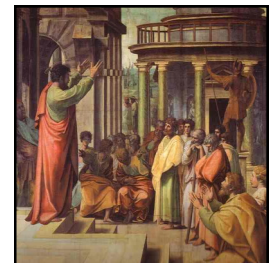
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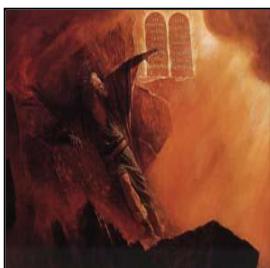


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