

2023

Annual Edition

Volume 15



[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: The Necessity of the Old Testament

The student of the Holy Scriptures, laboring to make progress in his research, should devote some time to the Old Testament. This is a key aspect for beginning to understand the wide scope of Sacred History.

But it really is a labor of love (as is any study of the Catholic Faith if engaged with the right intentions). The rewards from grappling with the Old Testament are priceless.

The Old Testament, in a number of sections, is difficult to follow as the events of Salvation History unfold. There are the many cultures. There are the foreign languages. There are the variety of authors extended over large epochs of time. There are the persons, places, and things from an ancient world far different from the Twenty-First Century. The reading, studying, and praying with the writings of the earlier canon will require time, effort, and patience. There is no easy shortcut for this mental exercise. Biblical Studies, to be done well, takes dedication and seriousness.

Consider this simple fact (among many). One will have the great graces of reading, studying, and praying with the same writings used by the Holy Family — this alone is reason enough to love and treasure the Old Testament.

The Catholic is “at home” in the New Testament. This is expected and fitting. However, he will likely not comprehend, appreciate, or put the Good News into right living to full measure, unless he interacts with the Old Testament.

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).

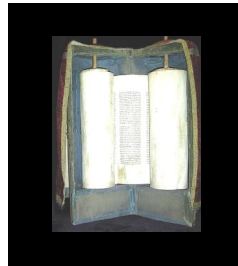
# Scripture Memorization and Exegesis from the Old Testament:

## Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace. What gain has the worker from his toil?

I have seen the business that God has given to the sons of men to be busy with. He has made everything beautiful in its time...” (Eccl 3:1-11).

The *Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition* (1965, 1966), for Ecclesiastes 3:1-11, formats verses 1 to 9 into stanzas (not followed in this column because of space constraints). Here is the *Knox Bible* (1950): “Everything must be done by turns; no activity, here beneath the heavens, but has its allotted time for beginning and coming to an end. Men are born only to die, plant trees only to displant them. Now we take life, now we save it; now we are destroying, now building. Weep first, then laugh, mourn we and dance; the stones we have scattered we must bring together anew; court we first and then shun the embrace. To-day’s gain, to-morrow’s loss; what once we treasured, soon thrown away; the garment rent, the garment mended; silence kept, and silence ended; love alternating with hatred, war with peace. For all this toiling of his, how is man the richer? Pitiably indeed I found it, this task God has given to mankind; and he, meanwhile, has made the world, in all its seasonable beauty... (Eccl 3:1-11).



A threefold grouping of the Old Testament is given as “History,” “Wisdom Literature,” and “Prophets.” The book of Ecclesiastes is placed in the middle collection. Tradition links authorship to Solomon, with a date perhaps near the Tenth Century B.C. (cf. A. Fuentes, *A Guide to the Bible*, pp. 147-151; A. Robert and A. Feuillet, eds., *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 458-465; W. Kaiser, *Everyman’s Bible Commentary: Ecclesiastes, Total Life*, pp. 11-42).

The pericope of Ecclesiastes 3:1-11 has the overarching fact of Divine Providence. God’s “Divine Government” carries out a divine plan: He created, preserves, and governs the world (cf. P. Glenn, *A Tour of the Summa*, pp. 25-26; D. Mercier, et al., *A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy* II:113-132). The pericope has cohesion.

The opening, “For everything there is a season” (*lakkōl z<sup>e</sup>mān*), and the closing, “He has made everything beautiful in its time” (*’eth-hakkōl ’āsāh yāpneh v<sup>e</sup>’ittō*) serve as literary bookends. Inside is the orderliness of God in 14 pairs of related opposites. The standouts are born~die, kill~heal, weep~laugh, mourn~dance, seek~lose, silence~speak, love~hate, and war~peace. This is a “merism”: a figure of speech of two polarities making a whole. All 14 pairs testify to the scope of God’s sovereign rule (cf. P. Ryken, *Why Everything Matters: The Gospel in Ecclesiastes*, pp. 60-71). The Gospel confirms this reign via Jesus Christ (cf. Lk 22:69; Jn 19:11).

Ecclesiastes 3:1-11 consoles the Christian. A theologian notes: “What does God busy Himself with? With everything. Nothing escapes the government of God. Not even temporal goods. It is not true to say that God is occupied only with spiritual things to the exclusion of material and temporal things as if they were bad in themselves or negligible” (A. Henry, ed., *Theology Library II: God and His Creation*, p. 389).

# Scripture Memorization and Exegesis from the New Testament:

## 1 Thessalonians 5:12-18

“But we beseech you, brethren, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the idlers, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess 5:12-18).

The above rendering is the *Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition* (1965, 1966). Here is the *Knox Bible* (1950):

“Brethren, we would ask you to pay deference to those who work among you, those who have charge of you in the Lord, and give you directions; make it a rule of charity to hold them in special esteem, in honour of the duty they perform, and maintain unity with them. And, brethren, let us make this appeal to you; warn the vagabonds, encourage the faint-hearted, support the waverers, be patient towards all. See to it that nobody repays injury with injury; you must aim always at what is best, for one another and all around you. Joy be with you always. Never cease praying. Give thanks upon all occasions; this is what God expects of you all in Christ Jesus.”

First Thessalonians, sent to the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia, likely was written from Corinth circa A.D. 51-52 during St. Paul’s second mission trip (cf. P. Grelot, *Introduction to the Bible*, p. 320; W. Most, *The Thought of St. Paul*, pp. 8-9; J. Steinmueller, *A Companion to Scripture Studies* III:223-229). The pericope of 1 Thessalonians 5:12-18 focuses upon the interior life of the Christian, and naturally, by extension, his relations among other believers. The extract may be divided into three sections.



The first section (vv. 12-13) has St. Paul imploring both “respect” (*eidenai*) and “esteem” (*hēgeisthai*) to be directed to the ordained priesthood and the episcopacy. This plea for admiration towards the clergy is a familiar Pauline theme (cf. 1 Cor 16:15-18; Phil 2:25-30; 1 Tim 5:17-19; Heb 13:17). The appeal is given further emphasis by the rendering in the Knox translation, with its later part of verse 13 as a warning against schism with the clause to “maintain unity with them.” This is timeless advice.

The second section (vv. 14-15) deals with fellowship among the Church Militant. The Apostle teaches the Thessalonians how to treat their fellow Catholics. Believers are to “admonish” (*noutheteite*) those who are lazy, “encourage” (*paramytheisthe*) those who are fearful, and “help” (*antechesthe*) those who are frail. All the while, to prevent the sin of pride, St. Paul exhorts all to “be patient” (*makrothymeite*). There is also a warning about taking vengeance, “evil for evil” (*kakon anti kakou*), which the Apostle writes elsewhere in Romans 12:14-21 is to be left to God.

The third section (vv. 16-18) then moves past the Thessalonica flock’s relations to the clergy and fellow laity. St. Paul now looks to the individual’s personal sanctity. He counsels to “rejoice always” (*Pantote chairete*); this theme of joy is expanded to almost an entire letter with the book of Philippians. The Apostle’s entreaty to “pray constantly” (*adialeiptōs proseuchesthe*) is to say: be conscientious of the presence of God. Finally, to “give thanks in all circumstances” (*en panti eucharisteite*) enables this joy and increase this awareness.

Fr. Cuthbert Lattey praises St. Paul: “One is almost tempted to call him the second founder of Christianity, introducing it to the civilized world of the time and enriching it with his doctrine and epistles...” (*Religion and Culture Series: Paul*, p. 28).

### *Radio Replies on the Gospels*

This column, many issues ago (cf. *Veritas Scripturae*, vol. 7, p. 4) had quoted one of the questions in the third volume of the Apologetics set, *Radio Replies*, from Frs. Leslie Rumble and Charles Carty. Among all the volumes, the authors employ the Sacred Scriptures. Consider the second volume, which will provide lucidity to the teaching of Biblical inerrancy.

Here is *Radio Replies* II:35, Questions 91 to 93 (reformatted for clarity):

“91. You regard the Gospel authors as historians?  
I insist on the historical value of the Gospels.”

“92. Critics maintain that the Gospels are not historical in the proper sense of the word.  
Similar comments can be found in quite orthodox and excellent Catholic works. For example, in his book, *Christ and the Critics*, Felder says that the Evangelists certainly intended to write history, and were subjectively qualified to report correctly the words and deeds of Jesus. But he adds that they had not ‘a high, scientific education, nor critical precision. But these they did not need. It was not a matter of solving deep problems, or of extracting the truth from old bundles of documents and examining it critically. They merely had to write down perfectly concrete deeds which had been enacted for the most part in public, and were of the utmost simplicity. They were not compiling an account of past centuries; nor did they even pay attention to the chronological sequence of events or the requirements of scientific arrangement. For this reason the Gospels are not historical works in the strictest sense of the term. But, although the Evangelists were not historians in the sense of Thucydides, the father of critical historical composition, they did write down the facts of the Gospel in accordance with the truth.’”

“A remarkable feature of the Gospels is their adherence to a bare delineation of facts.”

“93. Are not the Gospels entirely set in a theological context to serve theological purposes?  
It would be a gross exaggeration to say that. A remarkable feature of the Gospels is their adherence to a bare delineation of facts. Even where we should expect them to make capital out of what they write, they don't. Miraculous events are given without any expressions of astonishment or triumph. Ill-treatment of their Master is recorded without a word of indignation. If the writers were bent on supporting a thesis, having little regard for historical truth, they would have been fools to invent ‘hard sayings’ which could only alienate people; to record that Christ's own relatives thought Him mad; that He was weak enough to pray that the cup of suffering might pass from Him; to paint a picture of a humiliated, mocked, and crucified criminal whom they wanted men to worship; and to insist that His own people rejected Him. If His own people rejected Him, why on earth should others accept Him? No. They record what happened as if their only interest were that of observers and narrators. I admit that the idea of theological purpose is not without application to the Fourth Gospel. But that does not hinder the truth of the facts given.”

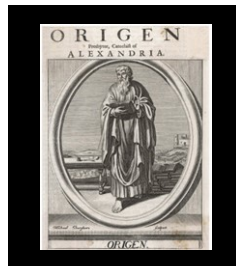
The three responses of Rumble and Carty make good sense, and are in accord with faith and reason. Not much needs to be added to their replies. One notes, following their responses, that the four Evangelists were really and truly writing down the facts that took place in the life of Jesus Christ. These matters were known to the public, and available for open scrutiny. As well, one must not impose the modern notion of “history,” with its strict chronology, upon the ancient Gospel records. Their authors conveyed the truth, even if not following modern conventions of sequential order. The Evangelists simply recorded the facts, without propaganda or embellishment.

## The Church Fathers and Scripture:

### Origen and Biblical Exposition

“Notwithstanding the doctrinal errors that may be laid to his charge, Origen is one of the greatest figures in ecclesiastical antiquity. He loved Christian truth most ardently and consecrated to it his whole genius and all his energies. He never separated the pursuit of knowledge from growth in personal holiness and charity towards others. His religion and piety equaled his learning and scholarship...” explains Fr. Joseph Tixeront in *A Handbook of Patrology*, page 97. Fr. Bertrand de Margerie offers similar remarks about Origen: “We will recall with insistence the philosophical and doctrinal errors with which, after his death, a number of popes and councils charged him, even to the point of anathematizing him: the preexistence of souls, subordinationism, *apocatastasis*.” De Margerie then continues: “All, however, agree in paying tribute to his genius, the sincerity of his faith, his knowledge of the Scriptures, his courage in the face of persecution — even to the point of martyrdom” (*An Introduction to the History of Exegesis* 1:96).

Origen (A.D. 185—254) is generally known as a “Father of the Church,” but sometimes he is designated an “ecclesiastical writer” (cf. J. Quasten, *Patrology* 1:9-10). This is the case because Origen, like Tertullian and Eusebius, didn’t meet all four qualifications of a Church Father with respect to orthodoxy, holiness, approval, and antiquity (cf. P. Hammel, *Handbook of Patrology*, p. 9). The problems with Origen concerned orthodoxy and Church approval. Nonetheless, this designation is not a strict rule; Popes have grouped Origen among the Fathers (cf. Leo XIII, *Providentissimus Deus* I.B.2.a; II.C.1.d [1893]). Origen has as many as 2,000 works attributed to him. He was also a “headmaster” for the famous “Catechetical School of Alexandria” (cf. *Veritas Scripturae* 1.6, p. 3); one of the major Patristic centers of guidance for Scriptural hermeneutics. The believer can appreciate such intellectual labors.



Some accomplishments left by Origen were his three kinds of exegetical writings. The “scholia”: brief explanatory glosses or notes about difficult verses or obscure words (patterned after the Alexandrian grammarians). The “homilies”: popular sermons, often with no preparation, recorded and revised, then published (sometimes posthumously). The “commentaries”: the most learned and detailed, and frequently a philosophical-theological tome, as in our modern sense (cf. B. Altaner, *Patrology*, pp. 226-227; O. Bardenhewer, *Patrology: The Lives and Works of the Fathers of the Church*, p. 140; K. Froehlich, ed., *Sources of Early Christian Thought: Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*, p. 16).

Br. Frank Sadowski provides some final observations: “Origen had a massive influence on Christianity, an influence in the early Church only rivaled by Augustine. His critical edition of the Septuagint was widely used, and his commentaries were widely read, imitated and plagiarized. His immediate students included Gregory Thaumaturgus and Dionysius of Alexandria. Pamphilus and Eusebius inherited his library, published his edition of the Septuagint, and wrote a lost *Apology for Origen*. Much of Eusebius’ *Ecclesiastical History* is a paean to Origen and the Alexandrian tradition he stood in. Athanasius admired Origen; the early ascetic and mystical writers drew on Origen for their teachings. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen published a collection of Origen’s writings, the *Philocalia* (not to be confused with the *Philocalia* mentioned in *The Way of a Pilgrim*). Basil’s brother Gregory of Nyssa shows the influence of Origen in almost all of his writings. Rufinus greatly admired Origen and translated some of his works into Latin. Even Jerome started out as an admirer of Origen, and even after he condemned him as a heretic, he still valued his exegetical writings” (*The Church Fathers on the Bible: Selected Readings*, p. 267).

## St. Thomas Aquinas and Revelation:

### His Works on the New Testament

Fr. Brian Davies remarks, in part, that “Aquinas spent much of his professional life expounding and commenting on the Bible. For him, as for the other professors at Paris in his day, the Bible was (quite literally, though subject to various interpretations) the word of God and, therefore, something in the light of which other teaching was to be judged. And he thought that it is here that *sacra doctrina* is to be found. For him, *sacra doctrina* (‘sacred teaching’) and *sacra scriptura* (‘sacred scripture’, i.e. the Bible) are virtually synonymous since their content is the same” (*Outstanding Christian Thinkers: Aquinas*, p. 11). With this quotation, we follow the previous issue of *Veritas Scripturae* by a survey on the commentaries of St. Thomas Aquinas. We now move to the New Testament books.

Two main textbooks are employed again. Details are from Fr. Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas, Volume 1: The Person and His Work*, pages 328-329, 338-340, 431-432 and supplemented by Fr. James Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas D’Aquino: His Life, Thought, and Works*, pages 370-373. Recall that Torrell’s opus has a third edition in work; some particulars below may need revision per newer research. A third textbook for consultation has come from Fr. Thomas Weinandy, et al., *Aquinas on Scripture: An Introduction to His Biblical Commentaries*, pages 73-244.

- Gloss on the Four Gospels: known as the *Catena Aurea* (“Golden Chain”), this is a collection of Patristic comments on the Evangelists that were gathered by Aquinas (at Pope Urban IV’s request). Dated from 1262/3 to about 1265/68, when completed in Rome. Thomas used secretaries, but finalized the work. The collection includes 22 Latin authors and 57 Greek authors (cf. *Veritas Scripturae*, Volume 7, p. 6).

- Matthew: a *lectura* (i.e., given orally vice in direct writing) dated either to Thomas’

first or second regency in Paris; either 1256-1259 or 1268-1272 (probably the specific academic year 1269-1270). The *reportatio* (i.e., report) was written by Friar Peter d’Andria, and a secular professor named Ligier de Besancon. The text was not intact, but has now been corrected by the 1955 discovery of a manuscript from the university library at Basel.

- John: dated amongst Thomas’ second regency in Paris; at the years 1270-1272. The *reportatio* came from Reginald of Piperno; requested from the friars and Adenulf of Anagni (provost of Saint-Omer). Tolomeo of Lucca says Thomas wrote the first 5 chapters, and Reginald reported the remainder. Early catalogues say Thomas corrected/revised Reginald’s *reportatio*.



- Paul: dates uncertain, perhaps over two periods. First stage in Italy, perhaps Rome, 1265-1268. Reginald of Piperno made a *reportatio* of 1 Corinthians 11 to Hebrews. The first ten chapters of 1 Corinthians are incomplete (missing 1 Cor 7:10 to the end of 1 Cor 10). Second stage in Paris and Naples. Romans probably done in Naples, 1272-1273. For more discussion on dates, locations, and contents, refer to the three textbooks mentioned earlier. Whatever the case, Thomas treated the entire corpus of St. Paul’s writings as a unified whole.

Closing the survey, consider these words: “Thomas’s principal academic responsibility was, not to lecture in philosophy or metaphysics or even systematic theology, but rather to illumine and explain the *sacra pagina*, the sacred page of Scripture. It is interesting — and highly regrettable — that among Aquinas’s least known works are his biblical commentaries, precisely those presentations that were, at least in principle, at the very heart of his project” (R. Barron, *The Crossroad Spiritual Legacy Series: Thomas Aquinas, Spiritual Master*, p. 21).

## The Magisterium Speaks:

### Vatican II's *Dei Verbum* 11: The Second Paragraph and its Footnotes, Part I

This column continues the examination of Vatican II's *Dei Verbum* (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, 1965); with attention to Number 11. One aim here is a realistic assessment of the document's strengths and weaknesses. Consider now a crucial and protracted footnote.

*Dei Verbum* 11's second paragraph, which addresses the matter of biblical inerrancy, contains **footnote 5**, with its 9 references. This is the lengthiest footnote in the entire Constitution. Here are the references (with some modern numbering) in order:

- St. Augustine's *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* 2.9.20 and *Epistle* 82.3.
- St. Thomas Aquinas' *Truth* question 12, article 2, C.
- Council of Trent's *Decree on the Canonical Scriptures*, session IV, paragraph 1.
- Pope Leo XIII's *Providentissimus Deus* II, D, 2b; 2c; 3-3a; 3b.
- Pope Pius XII's *Divino Afflante Spiritu* 3.

Below are the opening two quotations; both from St. Augustine. They must be taken into account in order to read *Dei Verbum* 11 properly. (It is lamentable the full quotations were not inserted directly into the paragraph. This omission is one of the Constitution's weaknesses).

St. Augustine: "It is also frequently asked what our belief must be about the form and shape of heaven according to Sacred Scripture. Many scholars engage in lengthy discussions on these matters, but the sacred writers with their deeper wisdom have omitted them. Such subjects are of no profit for those who seek beatitude, and, what is worse, they take up very precious time that ought to be given to what is spiritually beneficial. What concern is it of mine whether heaven is like a sphere and the earth is enclosed by it and suspended in the middle of the universe, or whether heaven like a disk above the earth covers it over on one side?



But the credibility of Scripture is at stake, and as I have indicated more than once, there is danger that a man uninstructed in divine revelation, discovering something in Scripture or hearing from it something that seems to be at variance with the knowledge he has acquired, may resolutely withhold his assent in other matters where Scripture presents useful admonitions, narratives, or declarations. Hence, I must say briefly that in the matter of the shape of heaven the sacred writers knew the truth, but that the Spirit of God, who spoke through them, did not wish to teach men these facts that would be of no avail for their salvation" (*The Literal Meaning of Genesis* 2.9.20; A.D. 401-415 [taken from J. Taylor, *Ancient Christian Writers* 41:58-59]). Augustine cautions about trying to find comprehensive or detailed scientific materials in the Scriptures, beyond what is stated by the sacred authors.

"For, I admit to your Charity that it is from those books alone of the Scriptures, which are now called canonical, that I have learned to pay them such honor and respect as to believe most firmly that not one of their authors has erred in writing anything at all. If I do find anything in those books which seems contrary to truth, I decide that either the text is corrupt, or the translator did not follow what was really said, or that I failed to understand it... I do not believe that you want your books to be read as if they were those of Prophets or of Apostles, about whose writings, free of all error, it is unlawful to doubt" (*Epistle* 82.3; A.D. 405 [taken from W. Parsons, *The Fathers of the Church* 12:392]). This is the relevant section from a larger paragraph in *Epistle* 82. Augustine, writing to Jerome, proposes three reasons for difficulties in the Bible: (1) a defective text, (2) a poor translation, or (3) an uninformed reader.

Next issue will continue the examination of the remaining references.

## The Pontifical Biblical Commission:

### *Letter to Cardinal Suhard, Part II*

“ 1. In what concerns the composition of the Pentateuch, in the above-named decree of 27th June, 1906, the Biblical Commission already recognized that it may be affirmed that Moses ‘in order to compose his work, made use of written documents or oral traditions,’ and also that modifications and additions have been made after the time of Moses (*Enchiridion Biblicum*, 176-177). There is no one today who doubts the existence of these sources or refuses to admit a progressive development of the Mosaic Laws due to social and religious conditions of later times, a development which is also manifest in the historical narratives. Even, however, within the field of non-Catholic commentators very divergent opinions are professed today concerning the nature and number of these documents, their denomination and date. There are, indeed, not a few authors in different countries who, for purely critical and historical reasons and with no apologetic intention, resolutely set aside the theories most in vogue until now, and who look for the elucidation of certain redactional peculiarities of the Pentateuch, not so much in the diversity of the supposed documents as in the special psychology, the peculiar processes of thought and expression, better known today, of the early Oriental peoples, or again in the different literary style demanded by the diversity of the subject-matter. Therefore, we invite Catholic scholars to study these problems, without prepossession, in the light of sound criticism and of the findings of other sciences connected with the subject-matter. Such study will doubtless establish the great part and deep influence exercised by Moses both as author and lawgiver.

2. The question of the literary forms of the first eleven chapters of Genesis is far more obscure and complex. These literary forms correspond to none of our classical categories and cannot be judged in the light of Greco-Latin or modern literary styles. One can, therefore, neither deny nor affirm their historicity, taken as a whole, without unduly attributing to them the canons of a literary style within which it is impossible to classify them. If one agrees not to recognize in these chapters history in the classical and modern sense, one must, however, admit that the actual scientific



data do not allow of giving all the problems they set a *positive* solution. The first duty here incumbent upon scientific exegesis consists before all in the attentive study of all the literary, scientific, historical, cultural and religious problems connected with these chapters; one should then examine closely the literary processes of the early Oriental peoples, their psychology, their way of expressing themselves and their very notion of historical truth; in a word, one should collate without prejudice all the subject-matter of the palaeontological and historical, epigraphic and literary sciences. Only thus can we hope to look more clearly into the true nature of certain narratives in the first chapters of Genesis. To declare *a priori* that their narratives contain no history in the modern sense of the term would easily convey the idea that they contain no history whatever, whereas they relate in simple and figurative language, adapted to the understanding of a less developed people, the fundamental truths presupposed for the economy of salvation, as well as the popular description of the origin of the human race and of the Chosen People. Meanwhile we must practice that patience which is living prudence and wisdom. This is what the Holy Father likewise inculcates in the encyclical already quoted: ‘No one,’ he says, ‘will be surprised, if all difficulties are not yet solved and overcome.... We should not lose courage on this account; nor should we forget that in the human sciences the same happens as in the natural world; that is to say, new beginnings grow little by little and fruits are gathered only after many labors.... Hence there are grounds for hope that those (difficulties) also will by constant effort be at last made clear, which now seem most complicated and difficult’ (*Ibid.*, p. 318; English Edition, pp. 21-22).

Kissing the Sacred Purple with sentiments of the deepest veneration, I acknowledge myself to be Your Most Reverend Eminence’s most humble servant,

James M. Vosté, O.P.  
Secretary, Pontifical Biblical Commission  
January 16, 1948”

(reformatted slightly for readability)



“The prophets were authentic teachers given to Israel by God to keep her faithful to her mission and so prepare the way for the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. In the theocratic (or ‘God-governed’) kingdom of Israel the prophet was the legate of the divine King” explains Frs. Robert Dyson and Alexander Jones in *Scripture Textbooks for Catholic Schools V: The Kingdom of Promise*, page 40. This current article has in view God’s legate, Jonah.

The prophetic book of Jonah (*yônāh*) is set among the twelve “minor prophets” in the Old Testament. The book is a record of a prophecy, rather than a prophecy itself; a prose narrative on Jonah’s mission to the land of Nineveh. His activity was under King Jeroboam II of Israel in 782—745 B.C. (cf. J. Bergsma and B. Pitre, *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible* I:907-909, 919-924; H. Pope, *The Catholic Student’s “Aids” to the Study of the Bible* II:408-409).

A textbook observes: “Ancient readers took the book to recount the historical ministry of an eighth-century prophet named Jonah, whereas modern scholars tend to view Jonah as parable or allegory that is not intended to be taken historically” (J. Cavins, et al., *A Catholic Guide to the Old Testament*, p. 418). The question: is Jonah history, or a type of legend? The Catholic Church has not issued a binding, formal pronouncement on the specific literary genre of the book. To begin to answer the query, consider Scripture and Tradition.

Look at the Old Testament. 2 Kings 14:25 speaks of “Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet” (*yônāh ven-’āmmīṭay hannāvī*); basically repeated in Jonah 1:1, “Jonah the son of Amittai” (*’el-yônāh ven-’āmmīṭay*). Because Second Kings is certainly a book of history, and both verses name the same man and his father, one ought to conclude Jonah is a real person. Tobit 14:1-8 also points to Jonah as a concrete individual.

Move to the New Testament. The Savior in Matthew 12:38-42 (cf. Lk 11:29-32) speaks about Jonah and the penitent Ninevites in the same way as the real event of the queen of Sheba visiting Solomon (cf. 1 Ki 10:1-13). Fr. E. F. Sutcliffe states the obvious: “If the men of Nineveh did not do penance but are only imagined to have done so, what force would there be in Christ’s words?” (B. Orchard, et al., *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, p. 669). Jonah is mentioned again in Matthew 16:4.

With respect to Tradition, consider two ancient Jewish writings. Josephus treats Jonah as part of true history in *Antiquities* 9.10.1-2. Likewise does the non-canonical 3 Maccabees 6:8. Within the Christian era, prominent Fathers view Jonah as a real person. One may read Pope St. Clement of Rome (*Letter to the Corinthians* 7.1), St. Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 5.5.2), Tertullian (*Flight in Time of Persecution* 10.3), St. Basil (*Letter* 242), St. Cyril of Jerusalem (*Catechetical Lectures* 14.17-20), St. Gregory of Nazianzus (*Oration* 2.106-109), St. Ambrose (*Hexameron* 4.4.13), St. John Chrysostom (*On Repentance and Almsgiving* 2.3.18-20), St. Jerome (*Commentary on Jonah* 1.3-4), St. Augustine (*Letter* 102.6), and St. Cyril of Alexandria (*Commentary on Jonah*, preface). Patristic testimonies are plentiful (cf. A. Ferreiro, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament* XIV:128-148).

Lastly, the features of the book of Jonah indicate history. One finds real locations (Nineveh, Tarshish, Joppa), an interlude of prayer distinct from the narrative (cf. Jon 2:1-9), and the usual refrain “the word of the Lord came to Jonah...saying” (Jon 1:1; 3:1); typical of actual prophets. Such traits resemble a chronicle, not a kind of fiction. Hence, Msgr. John Steinmueller declares: “All the details of this book are historical and cannot be called into question” (*Some Problems of the Old Testament*, p. 171).

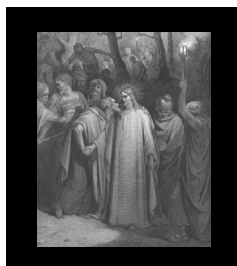


### A Profile of Judas the Betrayer

“One of the saddest things in the New Testament is the fall of Judas. With evidence of great sorrow the Evangelists speak of him briefly. Thus also do the apostles of subsequent times preserve a certain mournful silence concerning those who have gone in the way of Judas” notes Fr. A. E. Breen (*A Harmonized Exposition of the Four Gospels* II:67). This column is a brief sketch of an infamous man.

Judas Iscariot appears in the Gospel lists of the Twelve Apostles, found in Matthew 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19; and Luke 6:12-16. In relation to Jesus Christ, Judas is described in Matthew 10:4 as the one “who betrayed Him” (*ho kai paradous auton*). Likewise, Mark 3:19 (*hos kai paredōken auton*). Luke 6:16 speaks of Judas as he “who became a traitor” (*hos egeneto prodotēs*). These are pathetic descriptions — inscribed in God’s Word for the whole world to read and ponder. In all three lists, Judas’ name always appears last (Peter, the head of the Catholic Church, always appears first). Outside the lists, similar labels are used for Judas in Matthew 26:25 (“Judas, who betrayed Him”); 27:3 (“Judas, His betrayer”); John 6:71 (“he, one of the twelve, was to betray Him”); and 18:2, 5 (“Judas, who betrayed Him”).

The name “Judas” is taken from the Greek *Ioudas*; equivalent to *Yehudah* in Hebrew. “Iscariot” may be from the Greek *Iskariōtēs* or *Iskariōth*, traceable to the Hebrew *ish kariōt* (“the man from Carioth”) or Aramaic *ishqaryā* (“the false one”), or even the Greek *sikarios* (“the hired assassin”). Hence, Judas may come from Kerioth in Judea, a locale mentioned in the Bible (cf. Josh 15:25; Jer 48:24; Amos 2:2). Thus, he was the only non-Galilean among the Twelve (cf. X. Léon-Dufour, *Dictionary of the New Testament*, p. 254; J. Green, et al., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, p. 406; T. Longman III, gen. ed., *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pp. 979-980).



The New Testament discloses additional information about Judas. His father was named Simon (cf. Jn 6:71; 13:2, 26). We learn Judas was in charge of the money box for Jesus and the Apostles (cf. Jn 13:29), and was called a “thief” (*kleptēs*) because the traitor stole from it and had no concern for the poor (cf. Jn 12:4-6). At the height of Judas’ treachery, we learn “Satan entered into Judas” (cf. Lk 22:3). This evil deed took place within the solemn context of the Last Supper (cf. Jn 13:2). At this betrayal, Judas directed the arresting party to the Innocent Victim (cf. Mt 26:47). The despicable act was ushered with a kiss (cf. Mk 14:45). Judas would then take his own life (cf. Mt 27:5). This is the sad end to one of the first bishops (cf. Acts 1:16-20). One notices the pertinent prophecies from the Old Testament (cf. Ps 41:9; 69:25; 109:8; Zech 11:12-13).

In our day, there is the widespread error that hell is empty. But the omniscient Son of God calls Judas “a devil” (*diabolos*) in John 6:70. The Savior says of the traitor, among the Twelve, that “You are not all clean” (*ouchi pantes katharoi este*) in John 13:11. The Redeemer prays, in part, to His Heavenly Father: “I have guarded them, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition [*huios tēs apōleias*], that the Scripture might be fulfilled” in John 17:12. As well, the Master declares: “The Son of Man goes as it is written of Him, but woe to that man [*ouai de tō anthrōpō ekeinō*] by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born” in Matthew 26:24.

Fr. Patrick Crean describes Judas this way: “His ambition and greed caused him to lose by degrees his early fervour until at last he sank to the commission of a crime so black that history records nothing equal to it” (*Scripture Textbooks for Catholic Schools I: A Short Life of Our Lord*, p. 152).

The three Synoptic Gospels record the “Transfiguration of Our Lord”:

“And after six days Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain apart. And He was transfigured before them, and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with Him. And Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is well that we are here; if you wish, I will make three booths here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.’ He was still speaking, when lo, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.’ When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces, and were filled with awe. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, ‘Rise, and have no fear.’ And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, ‘Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead’” (Mt 17:1-9).

“And after six days Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them, and His garments became glistening, intensely white, as no fuller on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses; and they were talking to Jesus. And Peter said to Jesus, ‘Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.’ For he did not know what to say, for they were exceedingly afraid. And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, ‘This is my beloved Son; listen to Him.’ And suddenly looking around they no longer saw any one with them but Jesus only. And as they were coming down the mountain, He charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man should have risen from the dead” (Mk 9:2-9).

“Now about eight days after these sayings He took with Him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And as He was praying, the appearance of His countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white. And behold, two men talked with Him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His departure, which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, and when they awakened they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. And as the men were parting from Him, Peter said to Jesus, ‘Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah’ — not knowing what he said. As he said this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to Him!’ And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silence and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen” (Lk 9:28-36).

The Matthean account is the main focus.

First, one observes the common biblical practice of approximation. Matthew 17:1 says “after six days” (*meth’ hēmeras hex*) as does Mark 9:2 (*meta hēmeras hex*). Luke 9:28 uses “about eight days” (*hōsei hēmerai oktō*). This is a legitimate way to describe a period of time in Holy Writ.

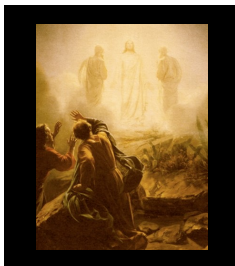
Second, the inner circle of the Apostles, “Peter and James and John” (*Petron kai Iakōbon kai Iōannēn*), are the only three here from the Twelve (cf. Mt 17:1; Mk 9:2; Lk 9:28). This privilege was given also for the raising of Jairus’ daughter (cf. Mk 5:35-43; Lk 8:49-56), and for the agony in Gethsemane (cf. Mt 26:36-46; Mk 14:32-42).

Third, the “transfigured” (*metemorphōthē*) appearance of the Savior is described in Mark 9:3 with His garments “glistening, intensely white” (*stilbonta leuka lian*). Luke 9:29 explains His “countenance was altered” (*prosōpou autou heteron*). St. Thomas Aquinas explains it was in the manner of the brilliance of Christ’s look, clothes, and testimony (cf. P. Kimball, trans., *St. Thomas Aquinas: Commentary on the Gospel of St. Matthew*, pp. 580-1). This miracle occurred atop Mount Tabor.

Fourth, Moses and Elijah are present. The former represents the Law; the latter the Prophets. Both testify the Son has power over life and death (cf. A. Maas, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, p. 187).

Fifth, the “voice from the cloud” (*phōnē ek tēs nephelēs*) in Matthew 17:5 mirrors the First Person’s earlier vindication of the Son at His baptism (cf. Mt 3:17). This sanction from the Father enables the Apostles to be “filled with awe” (*ephobēthēsan sphodra*).

Fr. Richard Gutzwiller sums up the event: “The scene on the Mount of the Transfiguration is a prelude to heaven” (*Day by Day with Saint Matthew’s Gospel*, p. 190).



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

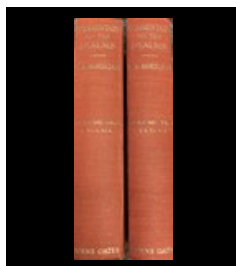
### *A Commentary on the Psalms, Volumes One and Two*

T. E. Bird. *A Commentary on the Psalms, Volumes One and Two*. London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1927. 469 and 427 pages.

Fr. Thomas E. Bird had been a part time professor of Sacred Scripture at Oscott College in Birmingham, England, and also did parish work. In other words, he was an academic who spent time in the real world. In addition to his work on the Psalms, Bird would later contribute the volume, *A Study of the Gospels* (1945), to the series, *Scripture Textbooks for Catholic Schools*. This column is a brief review of his two-volume set on the Psalms.

Bird states in the first book: “The priest has two books of prayer — the Missal and the Breviary. Both, but especially the latter, borrow largely from the Psalter. Hence the importance of the study of the psalms can hardly be exaggerated in the case of ecclesiastical students... Happy they who by singing the praises of God *attente ac devote* in the choir of the Church Militant gain their place in choir of the Church Triumphant!” (*Commentary on the Psalms* I:vii). This statement should not limit readership; Bird’s set is just as beneficial for layfolk. This becomes evident as one reads the commentaries.

The opening sections in the first volume cover the necessary introductory subjects one must grasp in order to comprehend the book of Psalms. The expected topics covered are “Hebrew Poetry” (chap. I); “Name, Place, Division, Canonicity of Psalter, and Number of Psalms” (chap. II); “The Titles of the Psalms” (chap. III); “The Authorship of the Psalms” (chap. IV); “The Date of the Psalter” (chap. V); “Subject of the Psalms” (chap. VI); and “Texts and Versions” (chap. VII). The last chapter starts an examination of the individual Psalms (chap. VIII). The second volume finishes this examination.



Bird’s commentary usually follows a basic pattern. Each Psalm has some general remarks (also covering their titles when applicable). The subject or main focus is given. Authorship and occasion is noted (when needed). Translations are given in Latin and English. Observations are set down about linguistic details. Lastly, there are exegetical notes.

Here is a sample, for Psalm 2: “There are four stanzas. The first gives a scene on earth — nations and their rulers rebelling against Yahwè and against his Christ (vv. 1-3). The second scene is in heaven — God laughing at the rebels, yet angry with them and proclaiming the King he has set up on Mount Sion (vv. 4-6). The third scene introduces this King. He is the Son begotten of Yahwè, and his inheritance includes all the nations of the earth (vv. 7-9). Finally the Psalmist himself speaks, advising the kings to take heed, to serve Yahwè with holy fear lest by divine anger they are brought to nought (vv. 10-13a). An exclamation of the happiness of those that trust in God closes the Ps. (v. 13b)... Many passages in the New Testament confirm the Messianic interpretation of this Ps. Jesus is called ‘My beloved Son’ by his Father, both at the Baptism (Mtt. iii 17, and parall.; cp. also Jo. i 34) and at the Transfiguration (Mtt. xvii 5 and parall.). St. Paul’s first preaching taught that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God (Acts ix 20), and that the Apostle of the Gentiles recognized Ps. ii as Messianic is evident from Acts xiii 33; Rom. i 1-4; I Cor. xv 24-28. (See also Heb. i 1-5, v 5; Apoc. ii 18, 26-28, xii 5; xix 15.) (*A Commentary on the Psalms* I:91).

Fr. T. E. Bird’s *A Commentary on the Psalms* is a readable, scholarly, and practical guide for clergy and laity alike. Used copies may be available for purchase at [www.bookfinder.com](http://www.bookfinder.com). As of this writing, a PDF for the opening volume is available at [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org).

## Book Recommendation (in-print):

### *Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies*

Arthur G. Patzia and Anthony J. Petrotta.  
*Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies*.  
Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002. 128  
pages.

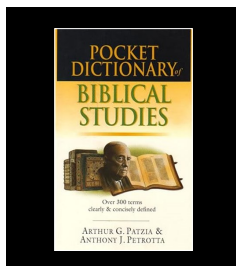
Anyone who has picked up a book about Holy Scripture, either at the popular level or a scholarly treatise, discovers certain terms and phrases that are part of “Biblical Science.” Some of these expressions may be little known or unclear, and this lack of familiarity is a barrier to knowledge. A small but valuable guide to address this problem comes from two academics, Patzia and Petrotta: *Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies*.

The preface opens this way: “This volume of approximately five hundred entries conforms to the overall purpose of the InterVarsity Press pocket dictionary series by providing brief definitions of significant terms and key names that students encounter in introductory courses and beginning textbooks on the Old and New Testaments. We thank our students who, over our years of teaching, gave us blank stares, looked at us inquisitively or were bold enough to raise their hands for clarification when we as professors used terms that were familiar to our world of biblical studies but were foreign to them.” This book was shaped from classroom experiences, and will be as much of an aid to non-classroom, private studies as well.

The back cover says one will find matters such as types of Biblical criticism (“genre” and “tradition”); terms in languages such as Greek (“agrapha”), Latin (“vaticinium ex eventu”), and German (“Wissenschaft”); ancient texts (“Allepo Codex”); literary features (“acrostic”); theories (“Augustinian hypothesis”); textual criticism terms (“Western text”); and others. A large number of the main expressions within Biblical Science are covered in the book. One will also discover previously unknown terms.

Here are sample entries, exactly as they appear (\* in front of a word means it has its own entry elsewhere in the dictionary):

“**Albright, William Foxwell (1891-1971)**. American OT scholar and archaeologist. Albright used archaeological research to put the Bible on solid historical ground. In particular, he sought to show the essential reliability of the \*patriarchs and the Mosaic traditions and laws. He was critical of \*Wellhausen and \*source criticism, and his critique found favor with many conservative scholars in America and elsewhere. He had an unparalleled knowledge of the languages and cultures of the ancient Near East. To many, Albright was known as the ‘dean of biblical archaeology.’”



“**inclusio**. A technical literary term referring to a framing or bracketing (Latin ‘confinement’), where the opening phrase or idea in a passage is repeated at the end. For example, Psalm 8 begins (v. 1) and ends (v. 9) with ‘O LORD our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth’ (cf. Ps 1; Ezek 25:3-7; Amos 1:3-5), thus reinforcing the importance of the words.”

Even picking up the book at random will prove to be an informative exercise. The entries are sometimes as brief as two lines, and in other instances extend to almost twenty-five sentences.

Complementary dictionaries in this same style are Richard and Kendall Soulen’s *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (an earlier edition was a required text in grad school in the 1990s), and Nicholas Turner’s *Handbook for Biblical Studies*. They are primers to the larger dictionary sets.

The *Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies* is a trustworthy source that may be put to regular use by the student of God’s Word.

**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).

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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 (per 1 Chr 28:9; Ps 37:5; Jer 9:23-24; Jn 15:5; Col 3:17; Jas 4:13-15).

+ + +

Mr. Salvatore J. Ciresi, founder and director of the St. Jerome Biblical Guild, served in the U.S. Marine Corps and is now employed in the aviation sector. He earned a Masters Degree 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) a writer for a variety of publications. Ciresi resides with his wife and children in Virginia.

