



*But  
do  
you  
really*

# **UNDERSTAND** *the Bible?*

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Copiam

## *Why the Knights of Columbus Advertise Catholic Faith*

The reason is simple. We Catholics want our non-Catholic friends and neighbors to know us as we really are and not as we are some times mistakenly represented.

We are confident that when our religious Faith is better understood by those who do not share it, mutual understanding will promote the good-will which is so necessary in a predominant-ly Christian country whose government is designed to serve all the people—no matter how much their religious convictions may differ.

American Catholics are convinced that as the teachings of Christ widely and firmly take hold of the hearts and conduct of our people, we shall remain free in the sense that Christ promised (John VIII, 31-38), and in the manner planned by the Founding Fathers of this republic.

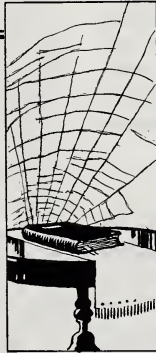
Despite the plainly stated will of the Good Shepherd that there be "one fold and one shepherd," the differences in the understanding of Christ's teaching are plainly evident. It has rightfully been called "the scandal of a divided Christianity."

If there is anything which will gather together the scattered flock of Christ, it is the nationwide understanding of the Savior, what He did and how He intended mankind to benefit by the Redemption.

To this end, we wish our fellow-Americans to become acquainted with the teachings of Christ as the Catholic Church has faithfully presented them, since the day the apostles invaded the nations of the world in willing and courageous obedience to Christ's command: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations..." (Matt. XXVIII, 19).

**SUPREME COUNCIL  
KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS  
Religious Information Bureau  
4422 LINDELL BLVD. ST. LOUIS 8, MO.**

# Too Many Know Too Little About The Bible



Millions of people the world over find consolation in the Bible. They find inspiration and guidance for the ups and downs of their daily lives in reading and re-reading its pages... at least their favorite passages.

Years ago thousands of our fellow citizens took advantage of the Knights of Columbus' offer of a free copy of the **FOUR GOSPELS**, arranged for daily reading, and the **BOOK OF PSALMS**. Many of these since have written grateful letters indicating the powerful and beneficial influence of these books upon their lives.

Anyone who has listened to radio quiz programs knows that the Bible is the world's all-time "best seller." If the number of Bibles published since the invention of the printing press were known, it would be an astronomical figure.

But, unfortunately, not all copies of the Bible in circulation are read. That is especially true of those which are distributed in pagan lands where natives sometimes use them as padding for clothes and shoes, for cigarette

papers and other uses.

In many Christian homes in this country, the Bible is gathering dust in book cases and is not read with regularity — if at all. Professors of English literature in colleges and universities today complain of the "ignorance of the Bible," — an ignorance which makes it impossible for their students to understand and appreciate references to the Sacred Scripture with which the English classics abound.

In the issue of May 8th, 1950, **TIME** magazine reported a survey made among 2,000 young people between 18 and 29 years of age. Of the 79% who said that "they believed in the Bible," 77% confessed that they never read it. Without a doubt, if such a survey were made nationwide, the findings would be pretty much the same. Too many people who "believe in the Bible," even those who talk about the Bible, seldom will be found reading it.

It is not our purpose here to discuss the various reasons for this widespread apathy toward Bible reading. But we do point out that even among those who read the

Bible, too many know too little about it. As a result, their novel interpretations of the Bible have sown the seeds of disunity among Christians and have caused effects which are not good and beneficial for society. They have brought the Bible, and even Christianity itself, into disrepute, especially in the minds of the many people who have little practical interest in religion and only a meager firsthand knowledge of the Bible.

### **Bible Misunderstood**

It is, of course, no reflection on the Bible that many readers misunderstand it because they know so little about it. The Bible cannot protect itself from the misuse of misguided men. And even though many honest and sincere people derive high ideals and the courage to live truly noble lives from reading its pages, others derive strange, startling and even subversive principles and practices from those same pages and as a result exert an evil influence.

From time to time, we read in the newspapers of people who have gouged out their eyes or cut off a hand in obedience to what they thought was the correct meaning of Christ's word: "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee..." (Matt. V:20-30). We read of others who drink poison or allow themselves to be stung by venomous snakes to prove their faith in Christ's words: "They shall take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it shall not hurt them" (Mark XVI:18). Others refuse to bear arms for their

country against aggressors and they base their position on the words of Christ: "Resist not evil," and "turn to him the other cheek" (Matt. V:39).

It is fortunate that not all readers of the Bible, and all who profess to shape their lives according to the teachings of Jesus Christ, take these literally. Otherwise the world would teem with one-eyed and one-armed monsters; the population would be notably lessened by those who died from snakebite or from drinking deadly poison. Indeed, would there be any followers of Jesus left in the world? And if all Christians were absolute pacifists, it would be a simple matter for an aggressor nation to invade our country, enslave us all and destroy freedom in the land.

Did Christ ever use figurative language? Did He address some of His words to individuals as private citizens and not to society at large? Were some of His directions merely in the form of advice and not of strict obligation — meant not as absolutely indispensable conditions for becoming His followers, but as counsels for those who would give up all things to imitate Him as closely as possible?

### **Right Meaning**

If the advice of the Lord not to resist evil were meant for governments as well as for individuals, what is the meaning of St. Paul's words that "the powers that be are ordained of God, and have been intrusted by God with the sword to execute vengeance on evil-doers"



(Rom. XIII)? How can a government maintain order and protect its citizens unless it can repel the threat of invasion by force (1 Tim. II:1-2) and arrest and justly punish those who menace the peace?

The majority of serious and well-intentioned Bible readers do not take literally such statements as we have cited. Or if they do, they recognize that these statements have restrictions and limitations in

the light of other equally important passages.

In any case, somebody is misreading the Bible. Either the statements of Christ are to be understood literally, and then those who take them figuratively are wrong, or they were meant to be taken figuratively, and then the literalists are wrong.

Somebody needs a better understanding of the Bible.

## **The Reading Of Holy Scripture**

Truth, not eloquence, is to be sought in reading the Holy Scriptures; and every part must be read in the spirit in which it was written. For in the Scriptures we ought to seek profit rather than polished diction.

Likewise we ought to read simple and devout books as willingly as learned and profound ones. We ought not to be swayed by the authority of the writer, whether he be a great literary light or an insignificant person, but by the love of simple truth. We ought not to ask who is speaking, but mark what is said. Men pass away, but the truth of the Lord remains forever. God speaks to us in many ways without regard for persons.

Our curiosity often impedes our reading of the Scriptures, when we wish to understand and mull over what we ought simply to read and pass by.

If you would profit from it, therefore, read with humility, simplicity, and faith, and never seek a reputation for being learned. Seek willingly and listen attentively to the words of the saints; do not be displeased with the sayings of the ancients, for they were not made without purpose.

Thomas a Kempis

# THINGS YOU MUST KNOW TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE

The more we know about the life and times of Shakespeare, and the people of whom he wrote, the better can we understand and appreciate his collected plays. This is also true of the Bible.

Yet many people begin to read the Bible with little or no knowledge of its background or its human authors.

We speak of "authors," for the Bible is not a single book, written by one author at one time and in one language. It is a collection of books originally written partly in Hebrew, partly in Aramaic and partly in Greek.

The oldest of these books was written perhaps as far back as 1400 years before Christ, and others at various intervals from then on down to the Book of Revelation (or Apocalypse, as the Catholic Versions entitle it), which was written toward the end of the first century of the Christian era. There is accordingly an interval of 1200 to 1500 years between the writing of the first and the writing of the latest book in the collection which has come to be known as the Holy Bible or the Sacred Scriptures.



The number of titles of books listed in the index of the King James Version is 39 for the Old Testament and 27 for the New, a total of 66. In the index of the Catholic versions, the number of titles given for the Old Testament is 46 and for the New, 27 — a total of 73 books. The reason for this

difference will be discussed later in this pamphlet. The point here emphasized is simply that the Bible is not a single book composed by one author, but a series of books by many different authors, writing in widely separated periods of time, using varying languages, and reflecting the thought patterns of the age in which they wrote.

The series of books making up the Old Testament was gathered together by the Synagogue, that is, the Jewish religious authorities. In all probability, they did not reach a final decision until the synod of Jamnia in Palestine held toward the close of the first Christian century, about 90 A.D. There was at the same time in circulation among the Jews outside Palestine, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. This version contained several

books which were excluded from the biblical library assembled and closed by the Rabbis at Jamnia. It was this Greek translation with its fuller contents which was taken over by the early Christian Church and was later declared official by the Church authorities.

### Church Preceded Bible

The series of books contained in the New Testament section of the Bible was gathered together by the Christian Church, which, however, did not reach a final decision for several centuries *after* the inauguration of Christianity. The early Church is responsible for the New Testament collection of the Holy Scriptures. The Church existed and functioned for several centuries before the collection was completed and made official.

Accordingly the Bible which the Jews use today contains only the Old Testament, and only those books of the Old Testament which the Rabbis at Jamnia decided should be included in the biblical library. The Christian Bible contains in addition to what is in the Jewish Bible, several other books which were a part of the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, or which were written originally in Greek and added to the version. But since the sixteenth century, the Bible used generally by the Protestants omits those Old Testament books which the early Christian Church received (not without doubts and hesitation in some quarters, it is true; but by the end of the fifth century, these were all settled) from the Greek

version in addition to the ones in the Jewish Old Testament fixed at Jamnia.

The vast majority of the books of the Old Testament were written originally in Hebrew. Only two books, Wisdom and Second Machabees (at present omitted from the King James Bible) were composed originally in Greek. Portions of Daniel (II:4—VII:28) and of Ezra (IV:7—VI:18 and VII:12-26) were originally written in Aramaic. Of the New Testament all the books were originally written in Greek except the Gospel according to St. Matthew, which was written originally in Aramaic. Such is the position commonly held in the early Church.

These ancient languages differ considerably in construction, syntax and method of writing from our modern languages. First the form of the letters of the alphabet underwent change or evolution in the course of the centuries. The Phoenician script was first used; this gradually changed to the Aramaic script, and then about the time of our Lord or a little later, the form of the Hebrew letters familiar in present day printed Hebrew Bibles came into use.

### Cause Of Confusion

In the earliest manuscripts, there was no spacing between words. There were no vowels in the text, no punctuation and no capitalization. The writing contained nothing but consonants, for which the vowels had to be supplied from memory. This became a source of confusion. For example, the three

consonants D-B-R can be read either as *dabar* (two long "a"s) or *dabar* (one long and one short "a"), or *deber* or *dober*, and accordingly may mean *he spoke, he ruled, a word, an affair, a cause or reason, a law suit, pestilence, death, pasture*. Only the other words in the sentence can be appealed to in order to decide which meaning is intended.

As for the absence of spacing between words, it can readily be shown how easily that arrangement can lead to variant understandings. Here is an example of a string of letters from our own alphabet with no spacing. Try to read it; AMANCURESTHETIC. It can result by introducing spacing here and there as A MAN CURES THE TIC, or AMAN, CUR, ESTHETIC. Years ago, a personal news item appeared in a country paper. It read: "Mrs. B... is having a visit from her unclean aunt." The typesetter had omitted the space between the words *uncle* and *and*.

### Language Oddities

In Hebrew, and less frequently in Greek, the change or omission of spacing can lead to considerable change in the sense. Similarly the insertion of variant vowels can appreciably alter the meaning of a text. For example, in Psalm 91 in the old Latin and Greek translations, there is question of "business that walketh about in the dark." The King James Version handles the phrase correctly when it renders it: "pestilence that walketh in darkness." The variation is the result of supplying different vowels. The old translators read

*dabar*; the King James translators read *deber*.

These few examples show clearly the difficulties attendant on making a correct rendering of an old Hebrew text. It is true that vowels were added to the Hebrew text about the seventh century of the Christian era, but then the Latin and Greek and Syriac and other ancient versions had been in existence and use for centuries. It is also true that spacing and punctuation were added in the course of time, but not soon enough for the earliest translators to be benefited or assisted by them. And anyway, may we not with reason inquire whether those who spaced the words and added the vowels to the text were always correct?

Not infrequently modern translators of the original texts depart from the spacings and vocalization added by the Jewish scholars about the seventh century A. D. and get meanings widely different from one another and from the King James Version. One example will suffice. It is from Psalm 2, 11.

King James: *Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son lest he be angry.*

Moffat: *Worship the Eternal reverently, shudder and submit to him, do homage to him truly.*

Goodspeed: *Serve the Lord with fear, kiss his feet with trembling.*

Roman: *Serve the Lord reverently, and rejoice in him; tremblingly do homage to him.*

Douay-Rheims: *Serve the Lord in fear and rejoice unto him with trembling. Embrace discipline.*

A good presentation of the diffi-



culties that accompany the work of translating the Scriptures out of the Old Testament originals will be found in Moffat's *The Bible, A New Translation*, pp. xix-xxi: In *Problems of New Testament Translation*, Dr. Goodspeed discusses the same point in regard to translating the New Testament.

### Can You Read It?

Suppose a very familiar passage of the Bible in the English Version is here set down without vowels, without spacing, all in capitals. Here is what it looks like, and the reader will probably have much difficulty in recognizing the passage:

RFTHRWHRTNHVNHLLWD  
BTHNMTHTHKNMGDMCMTHW  
LLBD

NNRTHSTSNHVNGVSTHSD  
RDLBRDNDFRGVSRDBTSSWF  
RFVRDBTRSNDLDSNTNTMP  
TTNBTDLBRFRMBL

That is The Lord's Prayer! Change the letters to those of the Hebrew alphabet, and imagine the difficulty of understanding an original Hebrew text without spacing or vowels.

The Hebrews who wrote the Old and most of the New Testament did not think, and consequently did not express themselves, in quite the way to which we of the twentieth century are accustomed. Yes, it is true that God is the principal author of the Bible; He inspired it all, but it is also true that He poured His thought into the mold of the Hebrew mind and allowed it to be expressed accordingly. It therefore assumes some of the characteristics and some of the

limitations of the fragile mold of human speech.

Readers of the Bible should understand some of the characteristics of the Hebrew mentality which have conditioned the message of divine revelation God wished to impart through the pages of the Bible.

First, the Hebrew mind was not analytic, that is it did not take apart, break up into its component elements the ideas with which it dealt. We, on the other hand, are trained by education to the laboratory technique of tearing down machines and chemical compounds to see what they are made of and how they work. The Hebrew was inclined rather to gather and combine fragments of thoughts and correlated ideas and express them in broad general principles. For example, we like exact figures; the authors of the Bible were content with such vague expressions as "seventy times seven" (Matt. XVIII:22), namely, times without number.

### Meaning Different Too

"One thousand" means an indefinitely large number. Especially in the Book of Revelation are numbers used in a symbolic sense, and he who would take them with arithmetical exactness would make a great mistake. The thousand years during which the just are said to reign with Christ (Rev. XX:4) means an indefinite period of time, and is understood by the majority of interpreters (non-Catholic and Catholic) to designate the whole Messianic or Christian

period from the first Pentecost down to the end of the world. The passage has given rise to the well known expression "millenium," which means a period of great happiness and prosperity. In the same book, the numbers seven and twelve by no means designate a mathematical quantity but simply a relative plentitude, while three and a half designates something brief or uncertain.

### Numbers For Names

With regard to the subject of numbers, an ancient practice of designating individuals by the numerical equivalent of their names must be kept in mind. This device was used especially when the name could not be mentioned without running the risk of being apprehended by the secret police and thrown into prison or to the lions in the arena.

In ancient times before the introduction of the Arabic numerals into the western world, the letters of the alphabet were used to express numbers. The first ten letters of the alphabet stood for the numbers from one to ten; the letters from the eleventh on stood for one hundred, two hundred, etc. Accordingly, the beast in Rev. XIII:18, whose number is that of a man, 666, designates an historical or political entity. Two eminent Protestant commentators (Swete and Charles) suggest Nero Caesar, as the numerical value of the letters making up this name totals 666. It was this Roman Emperor who started the Roman civil government on its spree of persecution

against the Christians, which endured well over two hundred years, and thus Nero is an apt symbol of any persecuting civil monarch or government.

The Hebrews also had a way of counting the years of a man's reign which is rather disconcerting to the exact historian of the twentieth century. They always counted a part of a day, year or month as a whole unit. Thus, it is possible that a king may have occupied the throne but for a few days, yet if some of these days were at the close of one year and the rest at the beginning of a new year, this king would be said to have reigned for two years. In this way, Christ's sojourn in the tomb during the period between His burial and resurrection is counted as three days, although He spent probably less than thirty-six hours in the tomb. But since a few of these hours came at the close of Friday and another few at the beginning of Sunday, according to the ancient Jewish method of counting time, it can truthfully be said that He spent three days in the tomb. Similarly forty years is a round number roughly designating a generation which can vary in length.

### Shades Of Meaning

Another characteristic of the Jewish mode of thought and expression which can be misleading to western readers is the habit of failing to recognize, or at least to give expression to, finer shades of feeling or emotion. Thus, for example, the Jewish mind at the time the Old and New Testament

were written did not as a rule distinguish nicely between love, attraction and preference on the one hand, and dislike, aversion and hatred on the other hand. Accordingly, the apparently harsh statement of our Lord, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke XIV:26) loses all its repulsive harshness when we recall that "to hate" according to the Hebrew mode of speech simply means "to love less" or "to give one's preference to another." When we read: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom. IX:13 quoted from Mal. I:2-3), the meaning is simply: "I have preferred Jacob to Esau."

### Another Difference

Again, the Hebrew mind did not distinguish carefully between different degrees of responsibility for an action. For example, if a person who can prevent an action does not do so, the Hebrew writer not infrequently will attribute that action to the one who did not intervene to prevent it, although the immediate responsibility is really attributable to another. We read for example "shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it" (Amos III:6). This oratorical question does not mean that the Lord, Who is all good and cannot be the direct cause of moral evil, or even directly will physical evil for its own sake, is the direct cause of evil. But He permits it as a punishment on the people for

their wickedness and infidelity. And the Hebrew writer, following his unanalytical bent, says in effect that God is the cause of all the evil in a city. We know that the sacred writer means that God does not do the evil; He merely permits it.

### "I Create Evil"

Another passage which may easily shock the unenlightened reader of the Bible is Isaiah XLV:7: "I create evil: I the Lord do all these things." If, however, the reader is acquainted with the Hebrew thought patterns and takes into account the whole passage where this statement occurs, he will be able to extract a very satisfactory meaning out of the words. The idea running through this passage is that God's Providence controls and shapes the destiny of Israel. He has caused the victories of Cyrus over the Babylonians, so that Cyrus may allow the Jews to return home, reestablish their religious worship at Jerusalem, and thus preserve the knowledge and worship of the one true God and the hope of the Redeemer to come. Similarly God has brought about the evils which afflicted the Jews in punishment of their sins—evils which were visited on them by the Assyrian and Babylonian monarchs as instruments in the hands of God to punish the Jews for their sins. In that sense—a perfectly intelligible sense—God creates evil.

The Hebrew mind had little use for the abstract; it much preferred to express abstract principles in concrete terms. Thus, instead of saying that those who would be

true followers of Christ should be prepared to sacrifice even that which is most dear to us rather than be untrue to Him, the Master says: "If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out," and St. Paul to express the willingness of the Galatians to make the greatest sacrifices for him, says that they would have plucked out their eyes and given them to him. (Gal. IV: 15).

Our Lord, instead of giving expression to the colorless, unimaginative principle that we should not point out the trifling defects of our fellow man, when we ourselves are disfigured with shortcomings, puts it in this expressive and graphic way: "Why beholdest thou the mote, i.e. (tiny speck) that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thy own eye (Matt. VII: 3)?"

### What Does It Mean?

The Jewish way is to make sweeping general statements with no restrictions or qualifications whatever, yet it is quite obvious that restrictions are to be made. For example, Jesus says categorically: "No man can serve two masters" (Matt. VI: 24). The obvious meaning is that no one can serve two masters who are opposed to each other, but if the masters are in harmonious subordination or coordination one to the other, we not only can but must serve them both. Thus, St. Paul commands us to be subject to the civil authorities (Rom. XIII: 1-6). And surely this is compatible with our obedience and service owed to God, as long as the civil authority does

not demand for itself the right to disregard God's law, and remains within its proper domain. And the Master Himself commands us to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's (Matt. XXII: 21). Sweeping statements in the Bible are not therefore to be taken with absolute literalness.

Also it must be remembered that words in current use in Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek two thousand years ago, when literally translated into twentieth century English do not always have the exactly identical meaning they conveyed in ancient times. For example, John II: 4 presents Jesus addressing His mother as "Woman." It would be considered highly disrespectful today for a son to address his mother in that way. But in ancient times, it was not so. In both Greek and Jewish circles, the term was considered to be one indicative of the *highest respect*, equivalent to "My Lady," as may be verified by consulting any good lexicon such as Liddel and Scott, or Thayer.

Then there is the term "brother," which can easily mislead an unwary Bible reader. In ancient times in Hebrew circles the term was used to designate not only that relative who had the same parent or parents but also to indicate more distant relatives, such as cousins, uncles, etc. It is very easy to verify this wider sense of the term "brother" in Biblical usage. For example, in Genesis XIII: 8, Abraham says to Lot: "We are brethren," and we know from



Genesis XI, 27 that Lot was Abraham's nephew.

Thus when we find in the Gospels that James, Joseph, Jude and Simon are called "the brethren" of Christ, this does not mean that they were sons of Mary, His Mother. Nowhere in the Gospels are they called the sons of Mary or is there any indication that Mary had any children other than Jesus Christ. Following the use of language then prevailing, the cousins of Jesus would be referred to as His "brethren."

### Yes—Who Is Right?

Another source of difficulty in arriving at a correct understanding of the Bible is the symbolic and figurative language with which it abounds. Whether or not certain expressions are to be taken literally or not has given rise to sharp differences. The most famous example is the words of Jesus: "This is my body . . . This is my blood . . ." (Mark XIV:22-24). Catholics understand the words literally; the majority of Protestants understand them figuratively. Who is right?

The best known example of symbolic language is to be found in the Book of Revelation. The description of heaven, of the beasts and the dragon and many other things are all symbolic and stand for realities quite different than the words express in their literal sense. The untrained reader of the Bible can easily be led astray by this mode of expression.

Until the invention of printing about 1450 A.D., the Scriptures

were laboriously copied by hand. There are many thousands of handwritten copies of the Bible, whole or partial, in Hebrew, Greek, Latin and other ancient languages, not to speak of the handwritten copies in English and other modern languages. It is inevitable when copies of any document are handwritten that mistakes be made. These are due to misinterpretation or ignorance, or misreading the master copy, or to deliberate changes.

It has been estimated that there are about two hundred thousand variants in the existing New Testament manuscript copies alone. The vast majority of these do not affect the meaning in any essential way, as they consist of variations in the order of words, the substitution of synonyms, different spelling and so forth. Only about fifteen of these variants affect the substantial meaning of the passages, and such passages can always be corrected in the light of other passages which touch on the same matter and where there is no textual difficulty. But these differing copies do complicate for the experts the problem of getting back to the original text of the inspired word.

### For Clear Meaning

It is the job of textual critics to restore the text of the Bible as closely as possible to the original reading. In doing this, these critics have the aid of ancient versions, quotations from the text in ancient writings, and the manuscript copies in the original language. By investigating all the evidence and follow-

ing a well fixed set of rules for deciding on the correct wording of the text, one can usually arrive at a comparatively certain restoration of the text. It is, however, no easy task, and there always remain a certain number of texts where more or less plausible but far from certain hypotheses and conjectures must be employed in order to arrive at an intelligible meaning. There are, particularly in the Old Testament, some passages where the Hebrew text has been so mis-copied that it has become meaningless. In such cases, if the ancient versions do not clear up the diffi-

culty, the critics will have to be satisfied with probable guesses as the way the text originally stood.

It will readily be appreciated that this matter of textual variants in the manuscripts renders the task of getting at the meaning of the original copies far from easy. It is the work of well-trained experts to restore the text of the Scriptures. They need to have a mastery of the Biblical languages, be able to decipher ancient handwriting and understand and apply carefully the principles which govern the restoration of the correct text of the Bible.

## **From Preface of Confraternity Edition of THE NEW TESTAMENT**

"The word of the Lord endures forever," is the saying of a great prophet (Isa. 40, 8) and of the Prince of the Apostles (1 Pet. 1, 25).

In her belief in the divine authority and the perfect truth of the Bible, as being the inspired Word of God, the Catholic Church has never hesitated. Nor has the Church forgotten that this sacred Book was destined by its Author to convey His message to all His faithful servants of every place and time. Neither has she overlooked the fact that this message must lie sealed and silent to many of her children unless given them in their own language, at least by the voice of their pastors, if not by means of the written page.

Further, the Church always has realized that Holy Scripture was committed to her charge by virtue of its very origin and object. Like the Apostolic Tradition of Christ's teaching, the Bible, too, is a treasury of divine revelation. As such, it can have no rightful guardian and dispenser except that Church which Christ formed and commissioned to teach to all the world the truths revealed for man's salvation. There can be no graver crime than the least corruption of that eternal truth which Christ has brought us. The Church is, therefore, watchful over Holy Scripture; and not only over its message, but likewise over its written transmission.

# BUT...DO YOU HAVE THE COMPLETE BIBLE?



A question of basic importance for readers of the Bible deals with the number of books which should be included in the Bible as the inspired word of God.

The King James or authorized Version (at least in the editions commonly circulated) has seven fewer books than the Bible which the Catholic Church uses. Could it be that the users of the King James Version have had an incomplete Bible ever since this version was first made?

In the May, 1950, number of *The Christian Herald*, a leading Protestant periodical, on page 56 there is an advertisement which announces: THE COMPLETE BIBLE. What is meant is that the edition here advertised contains what have come to be known among Protestants as the *Apocrypha*.

Now what are the *Apocrypha*? They are the seven books which the Bible used by the Catholic Church for centuries has contained and contains today. But since the sixteenth century these books have been usually and generally omitted from the King James Version. In

fact, the British and Foreign Bible Society has a rule which forbids the inclusion of the Apocrypha in the Bibles which they distribute. Could it be that the Bible so familiar to millions of readers and labeled *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and the New Testaments*, etc., known as the

King James Version, is an incomplete Bible? Well, if the title of the Smith-Goodspeed Version *The Complete Bible* is correct, then it would seem that those editions of the Bible which omit the *Apocrypha* are incomplete!

*The Pastor's Journal* is quoted in this same advertisement: "We can no more understand the New Testament without the Apocrypha than we can understand contemporary American life with no knowledge of the Civil War." Who has been keeping from the readers of the King James Version all these centuries that portion of the Old Testament without which there would be scant hope of understanding the New Testament, the most vital and important portion of the Bible?

The names of these seven books

are Tobit, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Jesus, son of Sirach), Judith, I and II Machabees, Baruch. Non-Catholic scholars such as Dr. Goodspeed and Sir Frederic Kenyon deplore the fact that the *Apochrypha* are generally omitted from modern editions of the King James Bible.

### The Apochrypha

The Catholic Church, which in practice had accepted the so-called Apochrypha from the beginning of Christianity as part of the inspired word of God, officially taught their inspired character in the decree issued at the Council of Trent in 1545. This decree added no new doctrine to Christian truth, but simply affirmed solemnly what had been the belief of the Church from the beginning.

This raises an important question: do the readers of the King James Version have an incomplete Bible while Catholic readers have the complete Bible? Do Protestants in their King James Version have the Bible in its entirety and therefore the complete message of God, or do Catholics intermingle with the genuinely inspired Scriptures some books which are of merely human origin? This important question should be settled satisfactorily by every reader of the Bible before he undertakes to gather the divine message from the pages of Sacred Scripture.

Most Christians agree that the Bible is made up of books which are inspired by God. Divine inspiration is the only basis on which any book has a rightful place in

the Bible. Divine inspiration may be described as follows: In a manner peculiarly His own, God moves and induces the human author to write, and so assists him while he writes, that he rightly conceives in his mind and writes those things and only those things which God desires to be written.

This divine impulse, however, is a secret and hidden thing. It cannot be detected from the quality or character of the book, or from the contents of the book or from the impression it produces on the reader. Even the human writer's own word is in itself an insufficient guarantee that he wrote under the divine impulse. For how can we be sure that he is speaking the truth? He may not even be aware of the fact that he is writing under divine influence. The only one, therefore, who can testify to the fact that a given book was written under that special divine influence and direction, which is called divine inspiration, is God Himself, and those to whom He chooses to communicate this information.

### God's Way

God can make the fact of inspiration known in one or the other of two ways. He can reveal it to His official representatives, the prophets in Old Testament times, and to the Apostles in New Testament times. They, in turn, will proclaim the fact to the rest of mankind, while God guarantees their truthfulness by miracles. If He chooses to do so, God also can reveal it to the individual readers of the Bible. But if He has chosen



to make this private revelation, He has acted in a way at variance with His manner of acting in Old and New Testament times.

As can be seen throughout the pages of the Old Testament, God communicated with the people at large through His chosen representatives, Moses and the prophets. In New Testament times, the indications all point to a continuation of the same manner of acting.

He spoke to mankind through His incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus, in turn, spoke to the Apostles, and they, in turn, were to communicate His divinely revealed message to mankind.

God does indeed send His Holy Spirit to those in His friendship; but He does not wish to provide each of us with a divine tutor, all our own. He has so planned things that mankind would learn revealed truth from the Apostles and their successors. "Go, teach all nations!"

After the death of the Apostles, the office of teaching was committed to the Church. This Church is, according to St. Paul, the "Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. III:15). This Church is "the body of Christ" and He is its "head" (Col. I:18). In that case, what the Church does, its Head does; what the Church teaches officially, its Head teaches, and therefore, that teaching must be true.

If we investigate the teaching of the Church for the first several centuries of its existence, we will find that it used the Greek Bible, and later the Latin Bible in the

western Church. It was the Greek Scripture, which St. Paul commended to Timothy (2 Tim. III:15). As Timothy was a Greek-speaking Jew, he must have been educated in the use of the Greek Scripture, and it is of this that St. Paul writes: "All Scripture is inspired of God..." (2 Tim. III:15). The Greek Scripture contained the so-called Apochrypha, the seven books and portions of other books which are omitted from most editions of the Bible in use among non-Catholics.

Incontrovertible evidence shows that the Catholic Church as a whole continued to use this complete Bible down through the centuries. It was only after the secession from the Church at the time of the rise of Protestantism, that seven of these books came little by little to be omitted from the Bible by the groups which left the Mother Church. Even they at first included the Apochrypha. According to Goodspeed (*The Story of the Bible*, p.168) "they still find a place in all complete printings of the King James Version of 1611... They contain much of literary and historical interest, and some passages of real religious value."

The Anglican Archbishop Abbot in 1615 forbade the omission of these books from printed editions of the Bible, but the first printed English Bible to make its appearance in the United States omitted them, and every subsequent printing of the Bible for general use among non-Catholics in this country has followed the bad example of the first printing. In 1826, as already

mentioned, the British and Foreign Bible Society passed a resolution or rule that they would never print or circulate copies of the Bible which contained these seven books.

Here then is evidence that the Catholic Church, the only Christian Church in existence for sixteen centuries, gave to the people the complete Bible, including the so-called Apochrypha. It is true that during the first four centuries A.D., there were some doubts that these books should be regarded as Scripture or not. St. Jerome, although not enthusiastic about these books, included them in his Latin version out of deference to the prevailing usage and belief of the Church, and he even quotes them as Scripture here and there in his writings.

At that time the Church had not spoken officially. But from the fifth century to the sixteenth, more than a thousand years, the whole Christian world, under the leadership of the Church, "the pillar and ground of truth," was unanimous in regarding these books as a genuine part of the inspired word of God.

### Books Omitted

Why then is it that in the sixteenth century, these books began to disappear from the Bible? It seems that the "Reformers" preferred to follow the Jewish list of inspired books. This list was drawn up at the synod of Jamnia in Palestine about 90 A. D. Note the date,—fifty years and more after the establishment of the Church. This synod was dominated by the

Pharisees. If you wish to know what Jesus Christ thought of the Pharisees, read Matthew XXIII. The men gathered at this synod laid down very narrow, nationalistic and a priori rules for determining what was an inspired book. 1) It must be ancient in origin, i. e. written before the succession of prophets was broken about the time of Ezra in the fourth century B.C. 2) It must have been written in Palestine. 3) It must have been written in Hebrew.

### A Bit Of History

Such principles assume with no good reason that God could inspire a writer only within the confines of the Holy Land and that the only language the omnipotent and omniscient God would condescend to permit was Hebrew. That, of course, would rule out the possibility of most of the New Testament writers being inspired, for they wrote in Greek, except St. Matthew, and nearly all of the New Testament books were composed outside Palestine.

The Apostles were not of the same mind as the Pharisees at Jamnia. There is abundant evidence that they used the Greek Old Testament, and that they read and reflect the influence of the Apochrypha in their writings. If you have a copy of the Apochrypha at hand, you might, in order to verify the foregoing statement, compare the following passages:

Compare James I:19 with Ecclesiasticus V:11

Compare 1 Peter I:6-7 with Wisdom III:5-7

Compare Heb. XI:34-35 with 2 Mach VI:18—VII:42

Compare Rom. I:18-32 with Wisdom XIII:1—XV:15.

It is true that the foregoing and many other passages that could be cited, are never quoted explicitly. But there are some books, whose right to a place in the Bible no one questions that are never cited in the New Testament.

The only other alternative to accepting the authority of the Church is to accept one's own private authority, and appeal to John XIV:26 and XVI:13 where Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to teach all truth. Actually, however, this does not mean that the Holy Spirit will teach all truth directly to every individual but rather to the Church which, in turn, will teach all truth and be the infallible guide for the faith of individuals. This is the only interpretation which the Bible and experience permits us to put on the

words. The Bible forces this interpretation because God's way is always to communicate officially only with His chosen and official representatives, and they, in turn, will pass on divine truth to the people at large. Experience forces this interpretation because the alternative explanation has led to nothing but confusion in the religious world. There are literally hundreds of sects, differing from one another, yet each claiming to have the correct interpretation of God's inspired word, and to be guided by the Holy Spirit. God is not the God of inconsistency and confusion, but of consistency and unity of doctrine.

It is for these reasons that the Catholic reader of the Bible accepting the authority of his Church, even as it spoke prior to the Reformation when it was the only Christian Church, has the untroubled conviction that his is the complete Bible.

The least that any sensible person should do is to learn the truth about the Catholic Church. For if it is true, as we have maintained since the time of Christ, that this is the Church the Savior established for our salvation...then it becomes imperatively important for each of us personally to clearly understand, and either to accept or reject, the evidence which is so freely available. All we ask any sensible person to do is— INVESTIGATE!

# BIBLE TRANSLATIONS ... GOOD AND BAD

Not all who read the Bible in English realize how much they depend upon the accuracy of the translation which they use. Translations can be good or bad.

It has been the policy of the Catholic Church from the earliest times to provide the people with the Bible translated into a language they could understand. If at times the Church found it necessary to prohibit the use of certain translations, it was because these translations were erroneous and therefore misleading and parading under false pretenses. Instead of being the word of God, they really were but the word of man. It is a great crime to present as the word of God what is nothing but the word of fallible man, and that is precisely what any incorrect version of the Bible does. The mere fact that the one doing so may think that he is correctly stating the views of the Almighty is no excuse.

The Catholic Church insists that translations into languages commonly spoken by the people must be accompanied with notes explaining the more difficult or obscure passages. Otherwise, the untrained mind



can readily misunderstand and twist the meaning to his own destruction, as St. Peter says (2 Peter III:15-16). Anyone who contends that the Bible is perfectly clear and can be easily understood without aid of footnotes stands in contradiction to the passage from the second epistle of St.

Peter, and defies facts of experience which have been multiplying for centuries.

The Catholic Church therefore approves of translations and promotes the circulation of the Bible among the people, but only in translations which have been thoroughly examined by her competent teachers for accuracy and trustworthiness. The official attitude of the Church is briefly stated by Pope Benedict XV in his encyclical letter addressed to the world under date of September 15, 1920: "Our one desire for all the Church's children is that, being saturated with the Bible, they may arrive at the all-surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ."

In the earliest days, Christians were for the most part Greek-speaking, but about the year 150 A.D. Latin came to be more and more



adopted as the common language. The first Latin translation of the Scriptures then made its appearance. About 250 years later, St. Jerome, who is acclaimed by many as the greatest Scripture scholar of all time, made an entirely new version from the original texts of the Old Testament into Latin. At the same period, there appeared versions in Syriac, Gothic, the various Egyptian dialects and so on, as need required.

Until almost the time of the Reformation, Latin continued to be the language of the reading public. In fact, the basis of all education was Latin grammar. Anyone who could read at all could read Latin. It was the language of the schools and universities. Lectures at the great medieval universities were given in Latin. Modern languages did not develop until shortly before the Reformation. When they began to be commonly spoken, translations of the Bible were made and published in these languages.

### Bible Before Luther

Contrary to a widespread false opinion that Luther is the one who gave the Bible to the people in the language they could understand, there is the unquestionable historical fact that the fourteen editions of the Bible in German and five in Dutch had made their appearance before Luther gave his translation to the German-speaking world. In the library of the Paulist Fathers, connected with the Church of St. Paul the Apostle in New York City, there is a copy of the *ninth* edition of a German Bible printed by A. Cogurger at Nuremberg, *the very*

*year that Martin Luther was born.* A translation into Spanish was published in 1478. In Italy, there was an Italian version which was so popular that it was reprinted seventeen times before the publication of Luther's German edition. In France, translations of the Bible into French were published from 1478 down.

### Anglo-Saxon Bible

In England, versions of at least the more popular and useful parts of the Bible into Anglo-Saxon made their appearance as early as 670. The handwritten version which is generally ascribed to Wyclif may not have been his work at all. The matter is in dispute. From the time of Luther there was a constant succession of English printed Bibles, each one profiting from its predecessors and correcting some of its errors and inaccuracies until finally there appeared the deservedly famous King James Version of 1611. It was based on all its predecessors, but succeeded in eliminating many of their errors. Yet it was imperfect mainly because of the imperfect Greek and Hebrew texts on which it was based.

Since 1611, vast advances have been made in the restoration of the original texts due to the discovery of many new manuscript copies. Consequently, a revision was necessary. It was published between 1881 and 1885, and it has been stated that the Greek text of the New Testament followed in 1885 differed in 5788 passages from the Greek on which the original King James was based. A further revision was published in the United States in 1901.

But since then, still further discoveries and studies have resulted in a still better Greek text, and so in 1946, there was another revision of the King James Version of the New Testament and of the Old Testament in 1952. One striking feature of this version is that the well-known conclusion of the Our Father "for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen," is relegated to a footnote with the words: "Many authorities, some ancient, add in some form." The editors have come to agree with the Catholic version which has never contained these words. These concluding words are undoubtedly an interpolation, a subsequent addition to the text and formed no part of the Lord's Prayer as He taught it.

### The Lord's Prayer

A brief explanation of how these words came to be inserted in the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament may be of interest here. The added words are sometimes referred to as "the Protestant ending of the Lord's Prayer." That is true only in the sense that this interpolation is current in Protestant circles, but it was in use centuries before the rise of the Reformers and is derived from Catholic sources. Its earliest form is found in the Didache, a document whose full title is "The Doctrine of the Twelve (Apostles)", and which was composed early in the second century after Christ.

The words were commonly appended in the public prayers of the Church at the end of every invocation. Even when the Lord's Prayer was recited, these words would be

added at the end, much in the same way as the ending "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit" are often added at the end of prayers today. Those who copied out the manuscripts of the Gospel according to St. Matthew had become so accustomed to hear the words added at the end of the Lord's Prayer, that when they saw them missing from their manuscripts of the Gospel, they concluded that some one had unintentionally omitted them. So one and then another copyist inserted the words until they found their way into a large number of copies. *All the while, the oldest and most trustworthy manuscripts did not have them.* The Latin version did not have them, but they did find their way into what was the "Received" or accepted Greek text. Since the Protestants made their translation from the Greek Received text which had the words, they were put into the current English Protestant version, the authorized or King James. But since Catholics made their translation from what was at that time the much more accurate Latin text which omitted the words, they are not found in the translation which Catholics made in 1582.

### English Catholics

The English Catholics, at the time when numerous English versions of the Bible were being published by the Protestants, were laboring under fearful difficulties. They were not tolerated in England; their property was being confiscated. Many were hanged, quartered or disemboweled for the sole reason that they refused

to switch their allegiance from the successor of St. Peter at Rome to the much-married and divorced Henry VIII, King of England. Yet despite these difficulties, they were able to bring out a translation of the Scriptures. The New Testament was published in 1582, but the Old Testament, owing to financial difficulties was not published until 1609. As this translation was made and published partly at Rheims and partly at Douay, it is known as the Rheims-Douay version. Genuine scholarship went into its making, but it was extremely slavish and literal in its adherence to the Latin of the Vulgate. Yet it had certain vigorous and forceful expressions, and is responsible for the introduc-

tion into the English vocabulary of words of Latin derivation, which are still in current use. This version was revised by the English Catholic Bishop Challoner in 1749-1752.

Within the last half century or so, numerous versions of the Bible or its part have made their appearance. Some of these were prepared by non-Catholics and some by Catholics.

For those who desire to verify the facts and figures given here concerning translations of the Bible into German and other modern languages, we recommend a book which cannot be suspected of the least Catholic bias: "The Cambridge Modern History," Vol. I, pp. 639-641 in particular.

## FREE CATHOLIC PAMPHLETS

If you do not understand any aspect of Catholic belief or worship ... and want the facts ... write today to Supreme Council. Knights of Columbus, Religious Information Bureau, 4422 Lindell Blvd., St. Louis 8, Mo. Don't let false rumors or malicious gossip mislead you when it is so easy to learn for yourself — from authentic Catholic sources — what the Catholic Church really teaches and what Catholics actually believe. Your questions will be answered promptly and without charge or obligation. Write today ... and ask for a list of available free pamphlets.

# Are You Prepared To Understand The Bible?

Many people have made a genuine effort to read the Bible but gave it up. "I couldn't make heads or tails of it," they will tell you.

Such persons are seldom to blame. The truth is they were not prepared to read and appreciate the Bible. For them, the Bible is as confusing as a book of higher mathematics would be to one who had never learned the elements of arithmetic.

The Bible was never meant to be a textbook for those who are "starting from scratch" in the study of revealed religion. God's revealed truth is not methodically presented in the Scripture. Christ's teaching is not given in any systematic form. Even a superficial reading of the inspired Book should convince a reasonable person that the individual books or all of them together were not meant to teach all the truths of divine revelation to those who are learning them for the first time.

Read the Old Testament and you will find that it contains the earliest traditions of the human race, the laws, the ceremonies for worship, the history, the moral and



devotional literature of the Jewish people who lived for two thousand years or more under the special providence of God.

In the New Testament, you will find four brief reports of the life, the words and the deeds of Jesus Christ, a digest of the activity of the Apostles, or at

least several of them in the early Church, together with letters of instruction and moral guidance, addressed by St. Paul to the Church in particular places; likewise, letters of Peter, James, John, and Jude to the Christians at large, etc.

All the writings of the Old Testament were given by God through writers who addressed themselves to those who possessed the Jewish Faith. They could and did assume that their readers would be familiar with the religious teachings of that faith. The writings of the New Testament are also addressed to believers in the Christian Faith and, though inspired writings, they assumed that the revealed truth was already known and accepted.

Nowhere do these inspired writings present themselves as a com-



plete textbook of Christian revelation. They speak of it as something already communicated, already believed. They allude to it as something known and simply needing explanation. Their purpose was only to confirm it and to induce Christians to practice it in accordance with Christ's requirements. Such writings were never meant to be the sole and direct source of Christian truth for those who had never heard of it before.

### **Preliminary Knowledge**

The difficulties which people experience in reading the Scriptures are not entirely due to the obscurity of the language, nor to inspired and sublime truths with which they deal. This difficulty is also caused by the fact that people begin to read them without the necessary preparation, without the preliminary knowledge which they presuppose in the readers. The Bible contains many allusions, hints and illustrations which cannot be correctly and fully understood without this preparation.

The Bible is incomplete in itself and can be understood only when read in the light of the Christian Faith as it has been preserved and taught by the Church. Those who read the Bible without this teaching and previous instruction meet inescapable difficulty and there are many errors into which they may fall.

Take, as an example, the question put to the Apostle Philip in the Acts (Chapter VIII), by one who felt it necessary to secure his salvation; "What shall I do to be

saved?" The Apostle answered and said in substance: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptized: and thou shalt be saved." Here is a very plain question expressed in the simplest manner possible; the answer seems equally plain and simple. Two things are required: to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be baptized. But is this so simple? Suppose the inquirer was attracted to the Jewish religion and had some elementary knowledge of its teaching concerning the promised Messiah Who was foretold by the Jewish prophets, then belief in Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah would have some meaning for him. But suppose the question were asked by a pagan who knew nothing of the Jewish religion, then the answer would be meaningless and certainly not simple or sufficient.

### **Reading Not Enough**

The answer of the Apostle becomes true, full and adequate for all men only when they have the traditional teaching of what it is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to be baptized. Those who do not have some understanding of Christian Doctrine will find it practically impossible to obtain an adequate knowledge of it by reading the Bible. But when they have such understanding, they cannot only find it in the Scripture, but they can find it set forth in a most attractive and impressive form. The Scriptures were meant for those who possess the Christian Faith and for those who, up to a certain point at least, already have been instructed

in the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel.

The Catholic Church never has objected to or discouraged the reading of the Bible. She has, on the contrary, always regarded the reading of the Bible as desirable or profitable. She approves and always has approved the use of the Bible and objects and has objected only to its misuse. The Catholic Church holds the Scripture to have been written by the inspiration of God and should be used to teach, to improve, to correct, to instruct, to perfect the man of God and to prepare him for every good work. But she does not recognize the Bible to be a systematic presentation of divine truth and to be sufficient to teach the true faith to a reader who is not prepared by preliminary instruction.

### God Wrote Nothing

The principle insisted on by the Church is a very plain and reasonable one that accords with the historical facts. God's original revelation was not made to mankind by writing or through the medium of a book. It was made in the beginning immediately by God Himself to certain individuals who communicated it to others. Men knew and believed the truth, knew and believed the one true religion, at least in its substance, long before the first book was written.

The primitive believers under the Christian dispensation were taught the Christian Faith orally by those who had been orally instructed by Christ Himself. The Faith thus preached and transmitted

by the Apostles to their successors was possessed by those who read any book of the Scripture and, in the light of this knowledge, they interpreted and understood the Scripture.

### Universal Rule

Something of this sort is obviously necessary in the case of all language, whether written or unwritten. Written language is not intelligible to those who are ignorant of the characters in which it is written or who have never learned to read. It is equally unintelligible to those who, though they know the alphabet and are able to read, yet do not understand the meaning of the words written. The understanding of a word comes from within the mind, not from without, and if the sense be not, to some degree, in the mind, there is no capacity for understanding what is meant.

The Catholic Church therefore follows a universal rule which is essential for the understanding of any teaching whether by written or unwritten language. The Church received Christian Doctrine from Christ Himself. By putting the members of the Church in possession of this Doctrine in a manner understandable to the minds of those whom she is addressing, she supplies the light and guidance necessary to enable them to read the Bible with profit and without perverting its words to their own destruction.

The Catholic Church requires its people to read the Bible with a reverential spirit, as it contains the

revealed word of God, and God Himself speaks to us through its pages. She also requires us to read the Scriptures under her guidance and direction and not to understand them in any way opposed to her teaching. The teaching of the Church was received from our Divine Savior and the teaching found in the Bible is likewise from God. There can be no opposition between them.

This does not mean that Catholics can read the Scriptures only when a priest is at hand to supply the correct interpretation, or that we do not have the free use of our own reason and understanding in reading the Scriptures and developing and applying their sense. It does not mean that the errors of transcribers and translators may not be corrected or that we may not use all the helps that may be derived from history, criticism and science, in correcting them. It does not mean that we may not use the physical sciences and literature, the facts brought to light by explorers and students of natural history in illustrating and settling the literal meaning of the sacred text. It means simply that we are not at liberty to interpret the Scriptures in a sense that would be contrary to the teaching of the Church as

it has come down to us from the time of Christ and His Apostles.

Thus Catholics, prepared by an understanding of Christian Doctrine which they receive from the Church, can study the Scriptures themselves and bring to their Faith new life and vigor from the inspired pages. And with this in mind, the eminent Catholic layman, Orestes A. Brownson, appealed to Catholics to go to the Scriptures and study them as did Christians of past generations. "Let us take in the sublime instruction," he wrote, "as it was dictated by the Holy Ghost in a language more beautiful and more sublime than ever did, or ever could, originate with uninspired men. Our Faith will profit by it; it will become broader, purer, more sublime, and more comprehensive; it will become stronger, more robust, more energetic, and more able to withstand the seductions of error and the temptations of vice. Our devotion will become more ardent, more solid, more enduring, flowing from a fixed and unalterable principle or conviction, not from a mere temporary feeling or emotional excitement; and our morals will conform to a higher standard and we will become capable of greater sacrifices and more heroic deeds."

# REAL PURPOSE OF BIBLE TO TEACH RELIGION



Readers of the Bible have many interests and each one turns to its pages to satisfy his own particular interest.

Some use the Bible as a book of devotion, in which they find thoughts and inspiration for prayer and meditation. For others the Bible is an object of study. They are interested in Oriental literature, ancient history, morals, forms of worship and the like.

But no matter what his special purpose in reading the Bible may be, everyone should bear in mind that the Bible is a religious book. Its teaching is pre-eminently doctrinal.

The authors of the Bible, of course, often speak of natural phenomena, the heavens, the earth, the sun, moon and stars, and describe the physical universe according to the popular conception and in language prevailing at the time. But their purpose is not to teach science and they are not writing a scientific report.

And while it contains many reliable historical facts, the Bible is not primarily a history of the Jewish people, or any other nation.

Even in those books of the Bible in which history abounds, the facts enlarged upon, the details selected, and the manner in which they are grouped and appreciated, indicate on the part of the writers the aim to teach something of far more value than the facts which they record — great

religious truths.

These truths are not systematically arranged or expressed in abstract and precise technical terms. They are presented in a concrete, popular and descriptive manner best adapted to the understanding of the people for whom they were intended.

God, as revealed to us in the pages of the Scripture, is very real. So real is He, that only "the fool hath said in his heart: 'There is no God.'" (Ps. XIII:1).

"All men are vain in whom there is not the knowledge of God, and who through these good things that are seen, gained not power to know Him that is, neither by giving heed to the works did they recognize Who was the Maker... They are not to be excused, for if they were able to know so much as to ex-



plore the course of things (the world and all in it), how did they not rather find out the Lord thereof?" (Wis. XIII; Rom. I:19,20).

God's distinctive characteristics are likewise very real. "God is a spirit" (John IV:24) and as such cannot be seen or touched or in any way perceived by human senses. Unlike all that we know in this world, He is not affected by the constant change that the passage of time works in all things. He is changeless and His life is not measured by time (Ps. 101: 26-28; Heb. I:10-12). He is not limited to any one place, but is present wherever His creatures need His omnipotent power sustaining them in existence (Jerem. XXIII:24). He knows the innermost nature of all that He has made. His knowledge penetrates even to "the bottom of the deep . . . into the hearts of men, into the most hidden parts" (Eccles. XXIII).

He is good . . . and there is no imperfection of evil in Him or in His dealings with men (Levit. XI). He is just and His judgments are just and fair (Ps. 118); but above all He is merciful and kind (Ps. 103), and as far as men in particular are concerned, most appealing is His love for them and all that He has made (John III).

### Only One God

Any reader of the Bible will be impressed with the emphatic insistence upon the fact that there is but one true God—there are no others (Deut. VI 4, I Cor. 8-4.) Yet, when mankind had sufficiently progressed and was able to rid it-

self of popular superstitious concepts of many gods, the one true God revealed Himself as He really is — Three Divine Persons; Three Persons individually distinct; Three Persons each divine because each possessing one and the same divine nature — "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (Matt. XXVIII:19). This fact was made known by "the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father" and who became man and "dwelt amongst us" (John I).

### As Men Saw It

While the Scripture contains much valuable information concerning God, it has relatively little to say concerning the vast universe of which we are a part. It does not go beyond the description of the outward appearances of the heavens and the earth, the vast vaulted ceiling of the heavens, the flat expanse of earth and the movement of the sun from horizon to horizon. These are described as they appear to the human senses and in terms and in ideas prevailing at the time. That such concepts and language do not always agree with today's established scientific concepts of such things, does not mean that the writers were guilty of error. They were no more in error than in the modern scientist who knows that the earth rotates in relation to the sun, yet tells his friend that he will go hunting with him "at sunrise." Their language was not meant to be scientific. As has been often said, they were not concerned with how the heavens go, but rather how to go to Heaven.

The one basic truth concerning the universe which is repeatedly stressed in the Bible is "Look upon heaven and earth, and all that is in them, and consider that God made them out of nothing..." (II Mach. VII:28). All things, visible and invisible, which are distinct from God, are His creatures. "Heaven and earth shall pass away" and in passing will be changed into a new heaven and a new earth (Matt. V:18; II Peter III:13).

### Man's Soul

It is man and his relations with God with which the Bible is principally concerned. Like everything else in the world, every man is God's creature. His body is formed from pre-existing material and is enlivened and animated by a spiritual and immortal soul which is the direct creation of God (Gen. II:7). Human beings differ *in kind* from other animals on the earth (Gen. II:20). Their superiority is found chiefly in their soul (Matt. XVI:16), for it is in their soul that they bear the image and likeness of God (Gen. I:20). They are all one great human family (Acts XVII:26), descendants from the first human couple.

The condition in which God intended the first men and women and their descendants to live differs vastly from that in which we find the human family actually living. The condition of the first man and woman was originally happy and privileged. They were innocent of evil (Gen. III:5) and enjoyed a special familiarity with God (Gen. II:19). The suffering of sickness

and all physical pain due to labor or any other cause were unknown to them. They knew of bodily death only as a possible punishment of disloyalty to their Maker whose will they, as responsible moral creatures, were obliged to obey.

Not unlike a person who has always enjoyed excellent health, who does not know what it is to be sick, who has seldom observed serious illness or death at first hand, and who takes the blessings of good health pretty much for granted until it is lost, the first man lost his happy and privileged state. How this condition in which they lived was lost—by the deliberate disobedience of God's command—is vividly described in the first Book of the Bible (Gen. III). Thereafter, a man is liable to physical pain, suffering and death. He is prone to error and an inclination to evil which is described as a "law in his members, fighting against the law of his mind" (Rom. VII:23, 24). Moreover, the unhappy consequences of his sin and the sinful state to which he was reduced were shared by his children and inherited by the whole human family; "By one man (Adam) sin entered into this world, and by sin—death, and so death passed upon all men, in whom all sinned" (Rom. V:12).

### Man Needs God

Even though he still possessed intelligence as an essential part of human nature and even though as a free agent there was still in him the capability of doing some good, the first man and all mankind de-

scending from him in a similar state, could not restore themselves to the privileged condition without the special help of the merciful God from Whose grace and friendship they had fallen. But right after the first man's disastrous sin, to him and to the whole human family was promised a Redeemer (Gen. III: 15), — a Redeemer who is elsewhere called a "second Adam" by whom all that the "first Adam" lost for himself and his posterity would be restored. But even before the Redeemer actually appeared in the world, Adam and his descendants could merit the merciful forgiveness of God by faith in the promised Redeemer and through humble sorrow for their sins (Ps. I:3,4-19).

As time went on, how long no one can say, for there is no complete and consecutive reckoning of time in the Old Testament, the consequences of man's sin appeared worse and worse in the human family as it spread out over the earth. The various tribes and peoples forgot the one true God Who made them and fell into the grossest kinds of superstition. It was then that God chose Abraham, separated him from his idol-worshipping associates in Mesopotamia, and from his descendants formed a people, peculiarly his own, the children of Israel. They were to be a "priestly kingdom and a holy nation" (Ex. XIX:6). It was their mission to preserve the knowledge and service of the true God and from them salvation was to be extended to the Gentiles (Gen. XII:3).

Among these chosen people, the hope in the Messiah or the Redeemer of the world was kept alive. This hope originated in the promise of deliverance made after the sin of the head of all mankind, and was gradually developed and made to designate a person possessed of characteristics each generation would appreciate. To Abraham, He was promised as a source of blessings to all nations (Gen. XXII: 17,18); to Judah as a great leader (Gen. XL:10); to Moses as an author of a new regime (Deut. XVIII:18). Under the Kings, He was described as one whose holy rule should extend over all nations (II Kings 7:11-16), and as a suffering person, who, by dying, would atone for the sins of the people (Isaias L:3).

### Christ Foretold

In later books of the Bible, new and more distinctive features of the Messiah were described. He was "the Son of Man" (Dan. VII:13) "the desired of all nations" (Aggeus II:8). Even a vivid description of the suffering He would be compelled to undergo at the hands of His contemporaries is given (Wis. II:11-20).

These and many other such predictions concerning the Messiah were fulfilled in the life and character of Jesus Christ. He came into the world and on Him were focused all the prophecies of the past. From Him radiated all the miraculous works which were expected in the Redeemer to come. He was the Son of David, Who

accepted the title of "The Messiah" (John IV:25,26) and "The Son of Man" (John I:51). He described His own mission as that of redeeming the world (Matt. XX:28) and performed the works which could be effected only by the omnipotent God and which gave divine approval to His claims (Luke VII:22).

### "Hear Ye Him"

All that is said of Jesus can be summed up in the words of God the father: "This is my well beloved Son. Hear ye Him."

He was born a King (Mark XV:2), but He declared that His "kingdom was not of this world" (John XVIII:36). His worldly-minded contemporaries refused to recognize Him as the powerful deliverer of the Jewish people that they had come to expect. Instead, they put Him to death because He solemnly proclaimed Himself to be the true Son of God (Luke XXII:71). But He rose from the dead as He Himself had foretold and as had the prophets long before Him, (Matt. XVI:71), thus making it evident that He was "the Christ," promised centuries before (Acts II:36) and that "there is no salvation in any other, for there is no other name under Heaven given to men whereby we must be saved" (Acts IV:12).

When Jesus Christ left this earth, the foundation of His Church was an accomplished fact. As recorded in the Gospels, He had selected and trained His Apostles for the continuation of His mission among men and after His departure, it was in and through them that He

was to make the religious conquest of the world (John XX:21; Matt. XXVIII:19,20; Acts I:8).

He had scarcely left the earth, in fact, when the one to whom He, Who called Himself the Good Shepherd, had personally entrusted the care of His flock (John XXI:15), the Apostle Peter, began to exercise his office and to teach and govern the Church with authority (Acts I:15 sqq; II:4 sqq; V:1 sqq). All the Apostles, with Peter at their head, began to fulfill the mission given by the Lord.

As mortal men, the Apostles would pass away, but the Church with its lawful successors in the ministry (Acts XX:28; Titus 1:5 sqq), who were deputed to teach and bring Christ's Sacraments to men for their sanctification and salvation (Titus III:5), was founded to last to the end of time and to remain forever "the pillar and ground of the truth."

### Church Infallible

This does not necessarily mean, however, that all the members of the Church or the successors of the Apostles would prove faithful to the grace of God, for Christ envisioned His Church as made up of both the good and the bad (Matt. XIII:21 sqq), and even at times governed by those who would prove unworthy of their trust (Luke XII:42-46). But it does mean that Christ's Church with Peter and his successors in the place given them by Christ and protected by Christ: "I am with you all days, even to the end of the world," will ever continue in the world the



divinely-entrusted mission of teaching and sanctifying men of good will.

As these, the highlights of the Bible are carefully considered, it must be borne in mind that the body of divinely revealed truth which it contains became more clearly defined through stages of gradual and progressive development. As Augustine, the great interpreter of the Bible, tersely put it: "The New Testament is latent in the Old and the Old Testament is patent in the New." That is to say: The Old Testament is correctly understood in its realization in the New, and the New Testament is correctly understood as a fulfillment of the Old.

It is a mistake therefore to read the books of the Old Testament and to expect to find there many truths such as man's personal survival and his resurrection in the future life as clearly defined as in the teachings of Christ. It is an even greater mistake to quote passages from the Old Testament as though belief in personal survival after death did not exist.

It is also a mistake, and a very tragic one, to read the pages of the Old Testament and to apply the doctrines found therein to Christians as though Christ, Who came to fulfill and perfect the Old Testament, had not yet come. Such is the mistake of those who look upon man's freedom from sin through the Redemption of Christ as due merely to the legal act of God's forgiveness. They ignore the real interior change of man from a state of sin to a state of enjoying

God's vivifying grace by which Christians again become the adopted sons of God. Such is also the mistake of those who would oblige Christians to live according to precepts such as the Sabbath observance which God issued to mankind before the coming of Christ, and which must be obeyed now as commanded by Christ and applied by His Church.

In the Bible we find God educating mankind with divine Revelation which was always given after the manner of a divine teaching adapted to the manners and conditions of the times. The Old Testament was a "teacher" for the Jews, pointing distinctly to Christ and educating them by slow degrees in view of His coming (Cor. I:23-25). From time to time new truths were made known by God and others were made more clear as mankind was prepared to receive them: "God, Who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all in these days has spoken to us by His Son, Whom He appointed heir of all things, by Whom also He made the world; Who being the brightness of His glory and the image of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, has effected man's purgation from sin and taken His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high..." (Heb. I:1-3).

In times past, God has always given His teaching through a living teacher; today He gives it through the living teaching body of His Church.

# Follow These Rules When Reading the Bible

Like any other book which has come down to us from ancient times, the Bible must be interpreted according to fundamental rules dictated by common sense. These rules must be followed in reading the Bible intelligently as well as studying it scientifically.

What every sincere reader of the Bible seeks is the message God wishes to communicate to mankind. Indeed it is imperative that the reader get God's revealed message correctly; otherwise he will be deluding himself into thinking that he has the divine message. This will cause him to act in the mistaken notion that he is backed up by divine authority, whereas he has nothing but his own fallible authority which has misunderstood and woefully missed the message God sought to communicate. And not infrequently it happens that he shouts and rushes into print to proclaim what he thinks is the divine message, whereas it is only his own fallible view of what the inspired word means. If he happens to be mistaken, as so often happens, then he is actually poisoning the wells



of divine truth. So, it is of the first importance to get the correct message of God and to have some reasonable guarantee that we have the correct understanding of the divine message.

*We must, first of all, be sure to get the correct meaning of the individual words.*

It is obvious that unless we understand the meaning of each separate word, we cannot hope to get the meaning of the sentence made up of those words. Let us illustrate the rule by an apparently simple word *faith*. It is of very frequent occurrence, especially in St. Paul's writings. He says for example: "We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." (Rom. III:28) What does *faith* mean here? (This question is treated more at length in our free pamphlet "But Can It Be Found in the Bible?") The answer is vitally important, because man's sanctification and salvation depend on it. "Faith," some say, "is the emotional experience of accepting Jesus as my personal Savior, and enjoying the consequent assurance that by His merits I am redeemed, saved, destined for an eternity of happiness in heaven." "Faith," ac-

ording to others, "is my intellectual conviction that Jesus is true God and true man, that He is my Lord, and His word is final and must be unconditionally accepted. I must be subject to Him. I must devote myself without reserve to Him, and consider it my most sacred duty to ascertain the will of Him, my Master, and carry it out as exactly and promptly as human frailty will permit." There is a vast difference in these two concepts of faith. Which is St. Paul's? We do not propose to discuss the matter here, but simply to point out that matters of vital importance to each one personally hinge on the definition we accept or the understanding we have of faith.

### What Is "Faith"?

In Rom. XIV: 23, we read: "He that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." It should be obvious that it is extremely difficult for the average reader to get the right meaning out of this passage or even of understanding the word *faith* correctly. Some readers have drawn strange conclusions from the last part of this verse. They have concluded that every act of the individual without faith is sinful, such as for example the natural affection a mother has for her child, or the charitable deeds of a naturally kind-hearted man. That, of course, is absurd. Yet that position has been taken by some readers of St. Paul.

To go back to the passage cited above from Rom. III: 28, — we find mention of *deeds of the law*. The meaning of the passage cannot be grasped unless it is clear what is meant by deeds of the law. Does it mean deeds prescribed by the Law of Moses? And if so, does it mean all of them or some only? Does it mean simply circumcision and other ceremonial practices prescribed by the Mosaic Law? Here are questions of great importance, of even eternally decisive importance. They demand a certain answer.

*The connection of words in the sentence one with another must be determined.*

We must ascertain what is the subject, what the predicate, what the modifiers of each and so forth. This, of course, is done by translators, but sometimes there is room for disagreement with the way in which they construe the parts of a sentence. We must also determine whether the verb is indicative or imperative. In Greek the two forms are sometimes identical. Here is an example: John V: 39 reads in the King James Version: *Search the Scriptures*. But all the modern versions available to the writer at the moment translate: *You search the Scriptures* (Revised Standard Version, 1946); *You pore over the Scriptures* (Goodspeed). So also many other modern versions.

Here is what a modern non-Catholic commentator has to say about the words: "Jesus is not exhorting the Jews here; He is arguing with them, and rebuking them

for their stubborn rejection of Him...

"It was a Rabbinical saying that 'he who has acquired the words of the Law has acquired eternal life;' and it is this kind of superstition to which the words 'Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life,' refer... In categorical sentences *dokein* (to think) in John indicates a mistaken or inaccurate opinion; *humeis dokeite* means 'ye think wrongly'."

### Why Search Scriptures?

"It is not possible to treat *ereunate* (ye search) as an imperative, and do justice to these considerations. Why should the Jews be bidden to search the Scriptures because they held a wrong opinion about their sanctity? The reading of them in the formal manner of Rabbis did not carry with it possession of eternal life..." (Archbishop Bernard (Anglican) in the *International Critical Commentary*).

Frequently however these words are interpreted by the advocates of the Scriptures as the sole rule of faith and the all-sufficient means of salvation, as conclusive evidence that Christ commanded all Christians to read the Scriptures as the sole source of His doctrine... that in so doing they would be sure of eternal life. Our Lord issued no such command or assurance.

*The context must be taken into consideration.*

By *context* is meant the connection of the statement with what goes before and what follows it. The most ludicrous conclusions can be deduced from the Scriptures if

passages are extracted without reference to their setting. Judas "went and hanged himself" (Matt XXVII: 5). "Go and do thou likewise" (Luke X: 37). Obviously such a use of Scripture is stupid, yet is it any more absurd than the quotations, wrung from their context, which are made to bolster some theory or to condemn some position?

The foregoing example is absurd, but similar cases, no less absurd, may be found in publications that are scattered far and wide. One reads: "St. John in the Apocalypse pictures the false Church (Roman Catholic) as a wanton woman, 'arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and with gems, called Babylon the great'... headed by a man of mystery, the antichrist..." Anyone who reads intelligently the context of this passage in the Book of Revelation cannot but agree with the foremost non-Catholic commentators that this description applies to the ancient Roman Empire which persecuted the Christians, and to all similar persecuting governments. Those who are interested may consult such leading non-Catholic commentators on the Book of Revelation as Swete and Charles.

### More Confusion

Here is another example of wresting a passage from its context and reading into it a meaning contrary to the intention of the author. Mark VII: 9 reads: "Full well ye reject the commandments of God, that ye may keep your own tradition." Any reasonable reader can readily gather from the surrounding verses of this



chapter that Jesus spoke these words of the Pharisees. But certain scatter-brain Bible readers try to apply this reference to the Catholic Church because the Catholic Church has retained down through the centuries a living consciousness of all that Christ taught, and because the Church insists upon calling this living consciousness "divine tradition" even though it does not appear in the Bible. As the divine tradition taught by the Catholic Church is only what Christ Himself taught, it is obviously silly to suggest that Christ would condemn such teaching.

### Another Error

Or to take another example. St. Paul, in writing to Timothy setting down the qualifications of bishops, says that the bishop must be blameless, *the husband of one wife* (I Tim. III: 2). Some readers of the Bible, disregarding the fact that St. Paul elsewhere counsels celibacy, immediately jump to the conclusion that the Catholic Church is in direct opposition to God's written word when it not only does not insist that her bishops be married men, but on the contrary insists that they be unmarried. A non-Catholic commentator, who follows the rules of interpretation, tells us what St. Paul really means: "The phrase might imply that a bishop must be a married man... but such a requirement would be scarcely consistent with the teaching of our Lord (Matt XIX: 12) and of St. Paul (I Cor. VII: 7-8); so the writer is only thinking of the true character of a bishop, *if*

*married*; as in verse 4 he deals only with his relation to his children, *if he has children.*" (The Rev. Walter Lock, D. D. in *The Pastoral Epistles in International Critical Commentary*).

Not only the immediately surrounding verses but also the remote context must be taken into consideration in determining the divine message. By that we mean the entire content of the message of revealed truth as set forth on the pages of the Bible must be taken into consideration to arrive at a correct understanding of the message and its meaning.

God is a good teacher and suited His message to the stage of intellectual development and moral progress of His people. That is why God did not choose, in Old Testament times, to make any clear, explicit revelation about the condition of departed spirits. Indeed, there are passages which could easily mislead the unwary reader to the false conclusion that some Old Testament writers held that man's lot after death was a complete cessation from being, reduction to nothingness, the annihilation of man's total nature at death. But if these passages are read in the light of other Old Testament messages, it will be seen that there was a definite conviction in the minds of the Israelites that man's spirit survived the death of the body. As time progressed, these notions about life after death, at first very vague, little by little became more explicit.

Finally in the New Testament it is clearly stated that not only is there survival of man's spirit after death, but that the survival will be happy and unending for the good, and wretched and unending for the deliberately wicked. It is further made clear that, at the end of time, the bodies of the good and bad alike will be raised to life and reunited with the spirit or soul to enjoy the reward or punishment earned by the soul while it sojourned in the body on earth.

There is another kind of context which must not be disregarded if we would attain the correct understanding of Jesus' teaching. This is called the historical context, and means the conditions of the time, the mental outlook of those to whom the words were originally addressed, and the particular abuses and errors against which His words were directed.

### 19 Centuries Ago

Another helpful consideration is the interpretation put on the words of the Lord by those most closely associated with Him, and who therefore were in an excellent position to understand their full significance. The fact that 1900 years separate us from Christ's sojourn on earth put us under a terrific handicap.

One example will illustrate this principle. Jesus said, "Call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, which is in heaven" (Matt. XXIII: 9). These words were spoken in reference to the practices of the Pharisees, who loved high-sounding titles, coveted them avidly and delighted with a

foolish vanity to be addressed by them. If we may judge from information gathered from the rabbinical writings, God our Father in heaven was no more in the minds of the scribes, contemporaries of Jesus, than a glorified Rabbi. It was said that God spent three hours each day studying the Law, that He kept its rules exactly, made vows and was rewarded for their faithful observance by the great heavenly Sanhedrin. It would seem, therefore, that when they sought and succeeded in attaining the title of Rabbi (teacher) or Father, they regarded themselves as the ultimate source of their teaching and of legal authority. They failed to recognize their utter dependence on God, Who alone is Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Knowledge, and as such the sole original source of all human wisdom and knowledge. The Pharisees are accordingly denounced for their arrogance and their vanity by our Lord, and the Apostles and all the followers of Jesus are warned not to imitate them in these vices. "Call no man rabbi, for you are all brethren."

At this time the Christian hierarchy had not yet been established; the Apostles had not been commissioned to go forth and teach all nations. The Apostles at this time were still given to quarreling among themselves as to who was the greater and asking if they might be awarded the chief seats in the Master's Kingdom when it would be established. The Apostles needed this warning, but it does not exclude subsequent appointment of

one as the chief Apostle, who under Jesus would be leader and guide of the others.

As a matter of fact, the Master did foretell that Peter was to strengthen the faith of his brethren (Luke XXII: 32) and did appoint him as the shepherd to look after the Master's flock on earth, His lambs and sheep (John XXI:15-16). Thus Peter became the earthly representative, the vicar of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and therefore a *father* to the flock. This did not mean a "father on earth," whose fatherhood originated with himself, but a divinely authorized state which had its roots in heaven in the fatherhood of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ. Peter was, in this capacity, a lowly instrument in the hands of God.

### Meaning Of "Father"

That such is the correct understanding of our Lord's words seems to be clear from the practice of St. Paul, who accepted the title of "father." He writes the Corinthians, "Though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, ye have not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (I Cor. IV: 15). In another passage, Paul call Timothy his own son (I Tim. 1: 2). If Timothy is Paul's son, then Paul is his father in some sense. If Paul begot the Corinthians, he is their father in some sense, because it is precisely the act of begetting which makes one a father. Paul did not ascribe this fatherhood to his own efforts. He makes perfectly clear his conception of his role as father. "Let

a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God" (I Cor. IV:1). "I have planted, Apollo watered, but God gave the increase" (I Cor. III:6). Paul regards himself merely as God's instrument; spiritual life and its increase are the work of God Himself. If Paul had ascribed this to himself and his own exclusive efforts and to what he himself had personally imparted to the Corinthians and to Timothy, he would be violating the spirit of the Lord's prohibition against calling anyone on earth "Father."

A further indication that the Lord's prohibition against calling anyone father on earth is not absolute, is the fact that he tells us to "honor father and mother" (Mark X: 19).

What our Lord meant when He made the remark in question is this: "Do not seek after vain and high sounding titles or parade them ostentatiously." But the Semitic mind was never content with an abstract statement of the kind, and so made it concrete by using the very titles which the Pharisees vainly sought and ostentatiously paraded.

*Language in the Bible must be understood literally except where the literal interpretation results in an absurdity.*

A general rule to follow in determining whether language is figurative or literal is this: Whenever the literal interpretation results in obvious nonsense, incongruity or falsehood, the figurative meaning must be accepted. For example, when Jesus called Antipas of the

Herod family a fox, His obvious meaning is that this ruler had some of the well-known characteristics of that animal, not that he was an unreasoning animal of that species, for it is a well-established historical fact that Antipas was a human being. A human being cannot at the same time be a human being and an animal. The meaning then must be figurative.

*When the figurative interpretation results in nonsense or absurdity or contradiction, the meaning must be literal.*

For example, when our Lord told us that we are to eat His flesh and drink His blood (John VI), He must have intended to be understood literally, because the figure of speech "to eat one's flesh" in Biblical usage means to calumniate, to devour a man's reputation by falsehood. For Jesus to ask such a thing is an absurdity. It would not, however, be absurd to drink wine which represents Christ's blood or symbolizes it, and many think that such is the Master's meaning. But if it is, then another difficulty confronts us. Such a metaphor is never found in the Bible; it was unknown to the audience Jesus was addressing. Why would our Lord use figurative language to convey such a tremendously important truth, when such language would not be understood and would also be extremely repulsive to His Jewish listeners? The Jews considered it a sin even to touch blood, and the thought of drinking it would have been abhorrent to them. The conclusion is forced on us that

our Lord intended His words to be taken literally.

Another absurdity results from the figurative explanation of the passage in John VI concerning the bread of life. Our Lord insisted upon the need for eating His flesh and drinking His blood, despite the revulsion of His audience. It must have been because He wanted to be understood in the plain, obvious sense of the words. He would not have allowed a misunderstanding to alienate the people He had come to instruct and to save. But He did not withdraw or explain away any part of His statement. A simple word could have stripped the words of every vestige or repulsiveness. This can only mean that He wanted to be understood literally.

There is another absurdity if we take the figurative meaning of the words: "Eat my flesh and drink my blood." It was our Lord's practice when He had used figurative language which might be misunderstood, to abandon the figurative form of speech and speak with severely plain literalness. This He did in His conversation with Nicodemus (John III: 1-12); with the disciples on more than one occasion recorded in the Gospels (Matt. XVI: 6-16; John XI: 11-14; John IV: 32-34; John VIII: 32-34). In John VI there is a question of vital importance to the spiritual life and welfare of His followers. To use figurative language which might have caused his followers to abandon Him, is an unthinkable procedure on the part of the Gentle Savior.



# WHY THE BIBLE NEEDS AN AUTHORITATIVE INTERPRETER

Considering all that is involved in the proper understanding of the Bible, it is clear that it is a difficult book to understand. This difficulty is experienced even by highly educated and thoroughly trained specialists in Biblical studies, and to a much greater degree by the average reader.

Yet, as St. Paul tells us (1 Tim. II:4), God "will have all men to be saved and come into the knowledge of the truth." And St. Peter directs that everyone be prepared "always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (1 Peter III:15). Christ demands as indispensable for our eternal salvation, that we believe what He has taught (Mark XVI:16). But how can we believe unless we know with certainty what our Lord has made known to us? His demand would be unreasonable and incapable of fulfillment unless He has provided means of ascertaining in some way in the Twentieth Century, clearly, unmistakably, and fully what He taught to the Apostles and which they taught to others in the first century. He must, therefore, have



provided the means of arriving at His full message and its correct interpretation. He is too good, too reasonable, to demand the impossible.

At this point, Protestants and Catholics part company and disagree fundamentally. Fifteen hundred years after the establishment of the Christian Church, "the pillar and the ground of the truth," (1 Tim. III:15), the Reformers rejected the authority of the living Church which had come down through the centuries. They substituted instead the authority of the Bible as each reader interprets it for himself. Christ's essential message was inscribed on the pages of an inspired book, they said, and every reader who is sincere and honest in his search for the truth will have the infallible aid of the Holy Spirit to read and understand that book correctly.

For Catholics, the Church is, and always has been, "the pillar and the ground of the truth." It is with the Church that Jesus promised to abide and in it and through it, He speaks authoritatively and unerringly to mankind.

Through the living organism, which, according to St. Paul is Christ's body (Col. I:17), Jesus Christ still speaks to the world and not only transmits divine truth to all mankind but also its authentic and correct interpretation. The Church is ever on the alert to warn against dangerous and false theories which are in conflict with the moral and doctrinal teachings made known to mankind by God's Divine Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. The Church speaks clearly, definitely and concisely. It does not straddle vital issues, it does not temporize or compromise when there is question of God's revealed truth. Like its Divine Founder, the Church speaks "as one having authority..." (Matt. VII:29).

This claim of a divinely appointed and final authority in matters of revealed truth sounds arrogant to many people. Whether it is or not depends on the historical and Scriptural evidence, on the words, intentions and promises of its Divine Founder. Millions down through the centuries have been convinced and are convinced today that the evidence is quite satisfying. They accept the unswerving and infallible authority of the Church and in their faith have found escape from doubt, from everlasting searching and have achieved a religious certainty which is the source of profound peace of soul.

The Bible cannot explain itself. It cannot protest against or correct the misinterpretation of fallible human minds. And as a book subject to misinterpretation, it can be

misused and made to become misleading, a source of doubt, disunity and confusion. In such a situation, who can be sure of the content, the meaning, and the import of God's message? Who is right and who is wrong among the many intelligent people who draw different and conflicting meanings from the same text?

Christ's coming to the earth as the Teacher of men would have been vain, if He left no way for men to know what He said and what He meant. But Christ, in His love for mankind, did provide the means by which we can know and understand His teaching. He left for us a teaching Church divinely protected from error and specifically commissioned to speak with authority when other voices speak only with confusion.

Is Christianity a religion to be found in a book by an author whose voice is forever silent? Or is it a religion of Authority, living, alert, ever ready to speak clearly and forcefully to proclaim God's truth... to interpret it and to safeguard it from being tampered with, distorted and diluted... an Authority which is unerring because through it, Jesus Christ perpetuates Himself in the world as the unerring Teacher of His beloved people.

Whose interpretation shall you believe? Whose opinion shall you follow? With your eternal destiny at stake, it is terribly important for you to decide — and to decide right.

Investigate! Seek honestly, intelligently, prayerfully, and you shall find the truth.

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