

The New American Catholic Study Bible: Was the Devil its Editor?! “There were false prophets among the people . . . just as among you there will be lying teachers who will bring in destructive sects . . . because of them the way of truth will be maligned . . . and their destruction does not slumber.” 2 Peter 2:1-3
“The NAB Study Bible . . . the Bible from Hell. We recommend the research of Ben Douglass for any who might have the least doubt about that conclusion.” David J. Webster, M. Div. Save Our Church

Finally, an answer to this pot of modernist poison! **The Evangelical Catholic Study Bible**® based on a new revision of the Catholic Douay Rheims (The NADR - Amplified & Illuminated ©)

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and designed to forthrightly address and utterly demolish the multitude of modernist views and interpretations presented throughout the NAB and to present the Holy Catholic Faith in a way to be understandable to our
EVANGELICAL PROTESTANT BRETHERN IN CHRIST

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The New American Bible: Is It Good for Catholics?

“This Bible is not only heretical; it is a work of shoddy scholarship all around.”



Wolf in Calfskin: The Rampant Liberalism of the NAB

By Ben Douglass, from his web site: <http://www.pugiofidei.com/NAB.htm>

Pugio Fidei - the dagger of faith.

How amazing is the profundity of your words! We are confronted with a superficial meaning that offers easy access to the unlettered; yet how amazing their profundity, O my God, how amazingly deep they are! To look into that depth makes me shudder, but it is the shudder of awe, the trembling of love. I regard with intense hatred all who attack the scriptures; if only you would slay them with your double-edged sword, that they might be enemies no longer! How dearly would I love them to be slain in that respect, that they might live to you!
(St. Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. Maria Boulding, O.S.B. [New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1998] p. 282 [12:14:17])

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Abbreviations

SJNAB: *Saint Joseph Edition of the New American Bible* (New York, NY: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1992).

DeRev: Vatican I Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius*, Ch. 2, *De Revelatione* (April 24, 1870).

PD: Leo XIII, *Providentissimus Deus* (November 18, 1893).

LS: St. Pius X, *Lamentabili Sane* (July 3, 1907).

PDG: St. Pius X, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* (September 8, 1907).

SP: Benedict XV, *Spiritus Paraclitus* (September 15, 1920).

HG: Pius XII, *Humani Generis* (August 12, 1950).

HOT: Fr. George Leo Haydock, *The Douay-Rheims Old Testament* (Monrovia, CA: Catholic Treasures, 1992).

HNT: Fr. George Leo Haydock, *The Douay-Rheims New Testament* (Monrovia, CA: Catholic Treasures, 1991).

CCHS: Dom Bernard Orchard, O.S.B., ed., *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1953).

KD: C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10 Vols. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006; Repr. 1866-1891).

ANF: Philip Shaff, ed., *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001).

NPNF: Philip Shaff, ed., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (New York, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1893).

PART I

I. Introduction

Holy Mother Church understands that false doctrine is the more dangerous to the extent that it is presented under "a form of godliness" (cf. 2 Tim 3:5). This is why, for instance, every Pope who reigned during the 19th century condemned Protestant "biblical societies." The putative aim of these societies was to promote knowledge of the Word of God by publishing and circulating free copies of the Bible in the various vernacular languages: certainly, in itself, a noble cause. Yet, under the godly bound form of a volume of the Sacred Scriptures, they delivered to unsuspecting Catholics erroneous translations of the sacred page which might harm their Catholic faith. Leo XII warned, "There are good reasons for fear that (as has already happened in some of their commentaries and in other respects by a distorted interpretation of Christ's gospel) they will produce a gospel of men, or what is worse, a gospel of the devil!" Pius VIII said of these societies that, "They skillfully distort the meaning by their own interpretation... Furthermore, the Bibles are rarely without perverse little inserts to insure that the reader

imbibes their lethal poison instead of the saving water of salvation."² Gregory XVI, with perhaps more charity, stated, "In the many translations from the biblical societies, serious errors are easily inserted by the great number of translators, either through ignorance or deception."³ Bl. Pope Pius IX accused the societies of "perverse explanations."⁴ In their versions, the biblical text was "subverted and most daringly twisted to yield a vile meaning."⁵ Lastly, Leo XIII confirmed that the versions published by the biblical societies were dangerous and forbidden to Catholics.⁶

It is the thesis of this article that the above papal condemnations apply in spades to one particular biblical society, and one particular biblical version, which are flourishing in our day: namely, The Catholic Biblical Association of America and its New American Bible, or NAB.⁷ *J'accuse*: the NAB, in many places, daringly redacts, rearranges, or otherwise mistranslates the sacred text, and it does so in the service of the modernist critical hermeneutic which is revealed in its "perverse" introductions and commentary. These comments repeatedly contradict or call into question the Catholic dogma of the plenary inspiration and inerrancy of Sacred Scripture⁸ as also the Catholic dogmas of Christology and Mariology. The NAB refuses Scripture the submission which is due to it according to the Catholic saints: "Holy Scripture is in such sort the rule of the Christian faith that we are obliged by every kind of obligation to believe most exactly all that it contains, and not to believe anything which may be ever so little contrary to it."⁹ Indeed, it freely confesses that Scripture is wrong in places and freely disagrees. The NAB charges the Bible with contradiction, concerning which Oecumenius may be quoted as representative of the faith of the whole world: "For nothing could be contradictory in the mouth of the one and the same Spirit."¹⁰ Yet more, the NAB would have our Lord in ignorance and our Lady in doubt of her faith, which can only eventuate in Catholic readers doubting theirs. This Bible is a danger to the faith of Catholics; it is a near occasion for sin.¹¹

And, tragically, the New American Bible is clothed in a form of godliness far more convincing than anything that a Protestant biblical society could ever hope to weave. Indeed, it possesses all the trappings of a faithfully Catholic Bible. It boasts three imprimaturs,¹² an apostolic blessing from Pope Paul VI,¹³ and the approval of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The NAB is, in fact, the translation which must be used in all English language lectionaries in Catholic Churches in America (although there are differences between the printed NAB and the lectionary NAB). The NAB is hosted on the Vatican's website.¹⁴ And as icing on the cake, the St. Joseph Edition even contains a smattering of attractive and traditional Catholic art: David slaying Goliath, Elijah ascending into heaven, the fifteen original mysteries of the Holy Rosary, the Stations of the Cross, etc. For a cherry on top, it dutifully informs the reader he may earn a plenary indulgence by reading Sacred Scripture for one half hour.

In sum, every external appearance leads the reader, Catholic or non-Catholic, to assume that this Bible represents authentic Catholic teaching. This being the case, Catholics will give this Bible to their children, trusting that their Church guarantees that it is safe, and inquiring Protestants, Jews, and Atheists will take its commentary as representative of how the Catholic Church understands Sacred Scripture. How tragic, then, when the Catholic child loses his faith, when the Protestant discovers that the Catholic Church believes the Bible is full of errors, when the Jew realizes that the largest Christian denomination admits that the New Testament misrepresents the Old, when the Atheist is confirmed in his suspicion that scholarly Christians do not mean what they say when they call the Bible the Word of God, and when all of them reject the mystical body of Christ.

The purpose of this study is to prevent such loss of souls by exposing the wolf beneath the calfskin of the NAB, and by sounding the alarm against it.¹⁵ This Bible does not represent authentic Catholicism. It is not "the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" (Jude 1:3). It is poison. To Catholics I say, "do not trust this Bible"; to non-Catholics, "please do not reject the Catholic Church on its account"; to the bishops, "protect your flock from this thing."

With loving confidence in their intercession, I place this study under the patronage of St. Joseph, St. Paul, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. Pius X, and Mary, Destroyer of Heresies.

II. How *Not* to Read Your Bible

The Catholic Books Publishing Company has added a guide entitled "How to Read your Bible" to the front matter of the St. Joseph Edition of the NAB. This guide, it is acknowledged,¹⁶ "has been adapted by John Kersten, S.V.D., from his book *Understanding Hebrew Literature*." While this guide is not part of the NAB proper, and hence not the object of any official episcopal approbation, it is nevertheless integrated seamlessly with such "official" front matter as the apostolic blessing of Paul VI and the Preface to the Old Testament, thus creating the appearance that all those imposing statements of ecclesiastical approbation to be found just inside the front cover apply in fact to it.¹⁷ For this reason, as well as its wide dissemination among the simple faithful and the sheer audacity with which it deconstructs the traditional Catholic doctrine of biblical inspiration, "How to Read Your Bible" merits to be vigorously refuted.

As with currency, so with doctrine: the best way to learn to recognize fraud is to familiarize oneself with the genuine article. As such, before proceeding to critique "How to Read Your Bible," it will be helpful to briefly review the Catholic doctrine of biblical inspiration as it is expounded in the authentic sources.

St. Paul declares in 1 Timothy 3:16 that "all Scripture is inspired by God," or, in Greek (partially), "all Scripture is *theopneustos*": literally, God-breathed. Scripture is the breath or speech of God in human form. Put another way, that which we read in Scripture is spoken to us by God (Matthew 22:31). This being the case, God's action in biblical inspiration is analogous to the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. "For as the substantial Word of God became like to men in all things, 'except sin' (Heb 4:15), so the words of God, expressed in human language, are made like to human speech in every respect, except error."¹⁸ Therefore, the First Vatican Council properly (and dogmatically) defines inspiration as divine "dictation."¹⁹ Leo XIII elaborates on the First Vatican Council's decree:

This supernatural revelation, according to the belief of the universal Church, is contained both in unwritten Tradition, and in written Books, which are therefore called sacred and canonical because, "being written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they have God for their author and as such have been delivered to the Church." This belief has been perpetually held and professed by the Church in regard to the Books of both Testaments; and there are well-known documents of the gravest kind, coming down to us from the earliest times, which proclaim that God, Who spoke first by the Prophets, then by His own mouth, and lastly by the Apostles, composed also the Canonical Scriptures, and that these are His own oracles and words - a Letter, written by our heavenly Father, and transmitted by the sacred writers to the human race in its pilgrimage so far from its heavenly country... [S]uch and so great is the excellence and the dignity of the Scriptures, that God Himself has composed them.²⁰

The Pope goes on to describe the mechanism of biblical inspiration, the process by which God caused the sacred authors to write His words:

[B]y supernatural power, [The Holy Ghost] so moved and impelled [the sacred authors] to write - He was so present to them - that the things which He ordered, and those only, they first rightly understood, then willed faithfully to write down, and finally expressed in apt words and with infallible truth. Otherwise, it could not be said that He was the Author of the entire Scripture. Such has always been the persuasion of the Fathers. "Therefore," says St. Augustine, "since they wrote the things which He showed and uttered to them, it cannot be pretended that He is not the writer; for His members executed what their Head dictated." And St. Gregory the Great thus pronounces: "Most superfluous it is to inquire

who wrote these things-we loyally believe the Holy Ghost to be the Author of the book. He wrote it Who dictated it for writing; He wrote it Who inspired its execution."²¹

Truly, Peter has spoken through Leo, for this is the same doctrine of biblical inspiration which is taught by St. Peter himself. "Men carried by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Peter 1:21).

Needless to say, the doctrine expounded by Kersten in "How to Read Your Bible" is a far cry from this doctrine of the Church. Kersten relates inspiration to a process of mutual influence whereby cultural sensitivities "inspire" gifted members of that culture to create, who thereby render those cultural sensitivities more acute still. He draws an analogy from the production of jazz music: the Negro communities are especially sensitive to music and rhythm, leading them to produce such august figures as Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Ray Charles, and these in turn have further heightened the musical and rhythmic sensitivities of the Negro community and indeed of the entire world. "More or less by this same process of mutual influence Hebrew literature came into being," Kersten declares.

We see in the Hebrew people a highly developed sensitivity for God's presence in their lives. From these pious Hebrew communities we see arise prophets, preachers, writers, who offered their (first spoken) reflections on that shared experience of God's presence with His people. In turn these prophets, preachers and writers heightened that religious sensitivity in their people.²²

Operating under such a sub-Catholic definition of inspiration, Kersten has difficulty distinguishing the inspiration of Scripture from the inspiration of jazz.²³ To be sure, he insists that Hebrew literature "is inspired (breathed upon) in a very special way by almighty God." But, before he can proceed to define what exactly is "special" about biblical inspiration as opposed to ordinary artistic inspiration, he must first insist at length upon what biblical inspiration is not:

This does not mean that God dictated His message as a businessman dictates a letter to a secretary. God takes the author as he is and leaves him free to choose his own means of communication. Isaiah was a great poet and composed beautiful poems to convey his message. Ezekiel was not well-versed in letters and his language is rather poor. Some authors chose existing folktales and even beast fables to bring out their point.²⁴

It is true that God did not dictate His message to the sacred authors *in the same manner* that a businessman dictates a letter to a secretary. "God chose men and while employed by Him they made use of their powers and abilities, so that with Him acting in them and through them, they, as true authors, consigned to writing everything and only those things which He wanted."²⁵ Nevertheless, God's method of communication is properly described as dictation, as seen above. Anyway, Kersten finally gets around to positively defining his own position with the laconic statement, "*Inspiration is guidance.*" He fleshes out this statement in the next section:

God Himself guided (inspired) the Hebrew genius in its searching out of the mysteries of the human condition... When this restless searching for truth and meaning culminates in unfolding one of God's mysteries, we speak of divine *revelation*. This means that God reveals some aspect of Himself or the human condition in and through man's endeavors to find out. Hence, "everything in the Bible is *inspired*, but not everything is *revealed*" (Pierre Benoit).²⁶

So it seems that, for Kersten, that which distinguishes biblical inspiration from ordinary artistic inspiration (apart from subject matter) is simply the occasional tap on the shoulder or tug on the wrist from God. The composition of Scripture is, then, in this view, an essentially human activity, with God merely coaxing it along like a parent teaching a child to ride a bicycle.

This position is thoroughly unacceptable. In order to consistently maintain this view, one must deny that God is the primary author of any part of Scripture, and moreover must deny that God is in any sense the author of those parts of Scripture where the Hebrews got things quite wrong, as Kersten will soon assert they did (after all, if a parent is coaxing a child properly, he is not responsible when the child falls off the bicycle anyway). This in spite of the solemn insistence of both Vatican Councils that God is the primary author of the books of Scripture "in their entirety, with all their parts."²⁷

Furthermore, this guide fails to recognize that much of revealed truth is wholly inaccessible to human searching, even searching which is performed in a spirit of prayer and in docility to the ordinary operations of grace. As such, human searching for truth and meaning can never "culminate in unfolding one of God's mysteries." God does not reveal supernatural truths "in and through man's endeavors to find out," if this is understood in the sense that God merely directs a properly human activity until this activity attains to revealed truth. This is a Pelagian and Rationalist conception of revelation. On the contrary, man receives revelation passively, *ex auditu*, that is, by hearing (cf. Rom 10:17).

Finally, while Kersten's definition may suffice to distinguish biblical inspiration from the inspiration of jazz, it fails to adequately distinguish between Sacred Scripture and any pious work of literature composed in a spirit of prayer and inquisitiveness. If "inspiration is guidance," as Kersten asserts, why is it then that Zephaniah is in the Bible whereas St. Thomas' *Summa* is not? Let's move on.

Sometimes inspired searching for meaning leads to conclusions which cannot be qualified as revelation from God. Think of the "holy wars" of total destruction, fought by the Hebrews when they invaded Palestine. The search for meaning in those wars centuries later was inspired, but the conclusions which attributed all those atrocities to the command of God were imperfect and provisional. See Judges 1:1-8.²⁸

While I understand Kersten's "sensitivity," his solution to the difficulty of biblical violence is, like his definition of inspiration, thoroughly unacceptable. Not only does it stand condemned by the Magisterium, which has condemned the position that the Bible contains errors *except* as regards faith and morals,²⁹ and thus has condemned *a fortiori* the position that the Bible contains errors *even* as regards faith and morals. Simply on a rational level, this position creates far more problems than it solves. Kersten would have us believe that the wars which the Bible plainly states were commanded by God were not in fact commanded by God, but rather were crimes against humanity perpetrated by Hebrew murderers. Then, centuries later, their descendants attempted to justify the crimes of their forefathers by ascribing said wars to the command of a deity. Perhaps it did not dawn on John Kersten, S.V.D., that justifying murder by ascribing it to the command of a deity is a moral abomination. Indeed, it is the moral equivalent of Nazi apologetics. This being the case, it is difficult to see how anyone could maintain that a holy God could have any part whatsoever in "inspiring" this activity. No, logic and conscience will not admit this possibility. It would be far more consistent and moral to simply deny biblical inspiration outright.

An additional difficulty with this position is that it opens the Pandora's box of enabling men to distinguish within Scripture, on the one hand, divine revelation, and on the other hand, immoral human inventions. If this principle be admitted, what is to stop men from rejecting the Bible's condemnation of, say, homosexuality, as Luke Timothy Johnson does, for example?³⁰ Indeed, once one relativizes the authority of Scripture in principle, one turns the Bible into a cafeteria from whose various offerings one is free to pick and choose, based on some subjective criterion, to believe or not to believe. Hence, one may accept that part of the Bible where it says that God is love and the nice story where Jesus forgives the woman at the well, but reject the biblical teachings that sodomy and fornication are sins and that wives must be obedient to their husbands. Immense numbers of souls have surely been lost because they have done exactly that. The Catholic doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy, on the other hand, is a firm

foundation: it safeguards the totality of revelation from those who would like to do away with its less than popular teachings.

Finally, Catholic tradition has already (long since, in fact) supplied us with a simple and satisfying solution to the problem of biblical violence which obviates Kersten's attempted solution. Murder is the unjust slaying of a man. Not all killing, however, is unjust. A soldier may justly kill enemy soldiers in a just war, and a state may justly execute criminals, for example. Similarly, no one kills unjustly who kills at the explicit command of God, who is Justice itself.³¹ God is the sovereign Lord of life and death, Who ordains both the time and the means of death for every living man, *good or evil*. He inflicts His universal sentence of death by whatever means should suit His purposes; and indeed, as the Bible records, He has on occasion chosen the ministrations of His angels or the armies of His chosen people. As St. Thomas Aquinas taught, God "inflicts the punishment of death on all men, both godly and ungodly, on account of the sin of our first parent, and if a man be the executor of that sentence by Divine authority, he will be no murderer any more than God would be."³²

Moving on, in the next section, Kersten offers us a piece of advice with which, in other contexts, I would wholeheartedly agree: "Therefore read the introductions to the Bible books and pay attention to the footnotes!"³³ In the present context, however, this advice is suited only to knowledgeable Catholics who are unlikely to be scandalized and who intend a proportionate good.

Next, Kersten makes a number of highly objectionable statements concerning the story of the Garden of Eden. These insinuate, at best, that the narrative surrounding Adam and Eve is fictitious, and at worst, that Adam and Eve are fictitious themselves. To be sure, true to Modernist form he does not assert his position plainly; he conveys his meaning rather through the techniques of the English gentlewoman:

Lady Marchmain was not diffuse, but she took hold of her subject in a feminine, flirtatious way, circling, approaching, retreating, feinting; she hovered over it like a butterfly; she played 'grandmother's steps' with it, getting nearer the real point imperceptibly while one's back was turned, standing rooted when she was observed.³⁴

Nevertheless, I think I have succeeded in catching his meaning. He states the following in the section of the guide on literary forms:

b) *The Allegory*: A figure story with a *veiled* meaning. Read Genesis 2, 3, 4:1-16, 6-8, 11, 19. For centuries these chapters have been misunderstood as inspired lessons in science. The Bible does not teach science; it teaches religious values. It uses these folktales to teach a lesson. Again, *the point* of the allegory (not the details) is God's message to you.³⁵

Later, he adds:

Most scientists hold that the human species has developed somehow from lower kinds of life. This knowledge helped Christians to understand that Genesis 2 and 3 is not a lesson in Anthropology, but an allegory, teaching us the lesson that sin is the root of all evil... You may hear interpreters of the Bible who are literalists or fundamentalists. They explain the Bible according to the letter: Eve really ate from the apple...³⁶

The mere fact that Kersten has identified the Garden of Eden as an allegory is cause for alarm. An allegory, in the technical sense, is a purely metaphorical narrative.³⁷ This definition is conformable to Kersten's, if not coextensive, and it implies that the whole story of the Garden is fictional. Furthermore, the reason Kersten stresses the word "veiled" in his definition of allegory is because this is what distinguishes it from the first genre which he defines, namely, the parable, "A short fictitious narrative

from which a moral or spiritual truth is drawn."³⁸ If, then, a parable is a fictitious narrative from which a lesson is explicitly drawn, an allegory is a fictitious narrative which contains a lesson for the discerning reader.

Next, if, as Kersten says, Genesis 2 and 3 do not teach Anthropology, then they do not teach the origin of the first man and first woman. Thus the story is divested of one of its fundamental truths. And if the lesson of the story is merely that sin is the root of all evil, *generically speaking*, rather than that one specific, historical sin, is the root of all evil, then the story is further divested of the dogma of Original Sin. I submit therefore that Kersten's position stands condemned by the Council of Trent:

If anyone does not confess that the first man, Adam, when he transgressed the commandment of God in paradise, immediately lost the holiness and justice in which he had been constituted, and through the offense of that prevarication incurred the wrath and indignation of god, and thus death with which God had previously threatened him, and, together with death, captivity under his power who thenceforth had the empire of death, that is to say, the devil, and that the entire Adam through that offense of prevarication was changed in body and soul for the worse, let him be anathema.³⁹

Clearly, the Catholic dogma of Original Sin depends wholly and completely on the substantial historicity of the story of the Garden of Eden, and it was in terms of this story that the dogma was defined. If the Garden of Eden is a mere allegory then this dogma is a house built on sand.

Because of this, the Magisterium has, twice during the last century, solemnly reaffirmed that the Garden of Eden is historical. First, in 1909 the Pontifical Biblical Commission, which St. Pius X had invested with papal authority,⁴⁰ decreed that it could not be taught that the first three chapters of Genesis were not true in the literal historical sense. Moreover, the Commission emphasized especially that the literal historical sense could not be impugned regarding Adam's transgression of the divine commandment "through the devil's persuasion under the guise of a serpent," their motivation for doing so being to protect the integrity of the dogma of Original Sin.⁴¹ Second, in 1950 Pope Pius XII issued an encyclical entitled *Humani Generis* which denounces the ideas that Adam and Eve were not real, individual people, that there has ever existed any true human who was not descended from them, and that the first 11 chapters of Genesis are not history in a true sense.⁴² He, likewise, saw the historicity of the Garden of Eden as being essential to the integrity of the dogma of Original Sin.

With that, let us return to Kersten. Does he confess that "Adam... transgressed the commandment of God in paradise"? At the very least, he does not confess that Eve ate from the apple, and he assigns the whole story to a fictitious literary genre. Because of this, I am under the impression that he does not.

In the next section, Kersten offers an ambiguous assertion which could easily be read as charging the Bible with scientific error. He states, "The ancient Hebrews saw the earth as a large plate with a huge vault over it. Above the vault is God's place. This outlook conditioned Genesis 1."⁴³

If it were true that the Bible contains scientific errors, as Kersten here seems to intimate, and as the NAB will enunciate more clearly in the commentary proper, this would be destructive of the credibility of Christianity, and St. Augustine might as well have remained a Manichee. For St. Augustine knew that if an author claimed to speak with the voice of God, but was caught in error in testable assertions of fact, then his claim to divine inspiration would be invalidated, and hence one could never trust his untestable assertions about religion. Thus Augustine was ultimately able to see through the pretensions of Mani:

It was providential that this man talked so much about scientific subjects, and got it wrong, because this gave people who had truly studied them the chance to convict him of error; and then by implication his insight into other, more recondite matters could be clearly assessed. Mani was content with no modest

evaluation: he tried to persuade his followers that the Holy Spirit... was with full authority present in him personally. It followed, therefore, that when he was caught out in untrue statements about the sky and the stars, or the changes in sun or moon, his presumption was plainly revealed as sacrilegious, because although these matters are not directly relevant to religious doctrine, he was... passing off his erroneous opinions as those of a divine person.⁴⁴

Similarly, the Bible claims to be the speech of God in human language. It passes off its opinions as those of a divine person, or rather, three divine persons. Hence, if the Bible could be caught out in untrue statements about the sky and the stars, then we would have no grounds for trusting its assertions regarding more recondite matters such as the Trinity.

This is why the Catholic Church has never admitted that the Bible contains scientific error. It is one thing to say, with Pope Leo XIII, that the Bible was not written for the purpose of teaching science;⁴⁵ it is entirely another to say that when it touches on issues of science it positively errs, as would be the case if in fact the Bible portrayed the world as a flat plate surmounted by a vault. Obviously, the former position is acceptable but the latter is not.⁴⁶ For Catholic exegetes have been bound by Leo XIII to follow St. Augustine's rule: "Whatever [scientists] can really demonstrate to be true of physical nature, we must show to be capable of reconciliation with our Scriptures; and whatever they assert in their treatises which is contrary to these Scriptures of ours, that is to Catholic faith, we must either prove it as well as we can to be entirely false, or at all events we must, without the smallest hesitation, believe it to be so."⁴⁷

It may be admitted that the sacred authors employed language and imagery derived from erroneous cosmologies, provided that they deliberately intended this language as metaphorical. On the other hand, it may not be admitted that they ever, in the course of writing Scripture, enunciated a single proposition concerning cosmology which they believed to be true but which in fact was false.⁴⁸ In consequence of this, Catholic exegetes have two options with respect to Genesis 1: they may argue that it is metaphorical, and was intended as such, or they may search for a literal interpretation which harmonizes the Scripture with the findings of modern physics. Contrariwise, to claim that it attributes to God the creation of a fictitious concept of primitive cosmology is incompatible with the divine authorship of Scripture.

Kersten's conception of biblical cosmology is on shaky exegetical ground as well. However, I will reserve my comments on this topic for my critique of the NAB proper.

In section 8, "The Bible on God", Kersten informs us that "the Bible does not offer a philosophy on who the 'Ultimate Reality' is in Himself; it is mainly concerned about who God is for us."⁴⁹ It is a gross exaggeration to claim that the Bible does not teach us of the immanent Trinity. Kersten adds, "Clouds, angels (blasting trumpets!), smoke, fire, earthquake, lightning, thunder, war, calamities, lies and persecution are biblical figures of speech to describe the awe-inspiring greatness of God."⁵⁰ I doubt the angels appreciate being told they are "figures of speech." And on the other side, how can "lies" be figures of speech to describe the greatness of God? This sentence is simply bizarre.

Kersten concludes the section: "As a Jew, who was addressing Jews, Jesus of Nazareth adapted Himself to this biblical way of speaking. Read Matthew 25."⁵¹ Are we to understand, then, that all that talk of weeping and gnashing of teeth and the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels is just figures of speech to describe the greatness of God? Or is it perhaps the talk of entering the joy of the Lord and inheriting a kingdom that is figurative? Or is it just the talk of Jesus sitting on a throne with all His angels? In any case, such confusing assertions have no place in a putative introduction to Scripture for the simple lay faithful.

Kersten moves on to the subject of biblical poetry:

[B]iblical poems in particular can easily be misunderstood. Read them as poems and not as scientific or historical reports, in which one tries to explain every detail as a revelation from God. See [the commentary on inspiration and revelation quoted above] and read Psalm 137: "Ballad of the Exiles," paying special attention to verses 8 and 9. The feeling, the thought, the total poem is inspired (guided) by God, though it is not necessarily revealed truth! Read some psalms!⁵²

As demonstrated above, this definition of inspiration is utterly devoid both of merit and foundation. The Catholic Church teaches that God is the author of Sacred Scripture such that each and every word in it is written primarily by Him. Everything in the Bible is a revelation from God, including Psalm 137:8-9. As for how we deal with the difficulty presented by these verses, it is possible to read the Psalm as merely describing, but not approving, of the conduct of those who would conquer Babylon.⁵³

In the next section, Kersten treats us to a naturalistic description of Israel's early prophets. "Like other nations in the Middle East, Israel had its *nabis* or prophets. These were groups of ecstatic persons, somehow related to a sanctuary. Music and dance heightened their exotic and vaguely religious activities."⁵⁴ Groovy. Kersten goes on to provide a similarly naturalistic description of Hebrew philosophy:

Like all peoples, the Hebrews had their sages or philosophers. In the Bible we find their thoughts mainly in the Wisdom Books. This ancient wisdom is a remarkable mixture of philosophy and poetry. Read it as an inspired search for meaning in life. Do not expect too many ready-made answers. See this literature more as a challenge to a faithful searching for meaning in your own human condition!⁵⁵

Here we continue to see the fruits of Kersten's view of biblical inspiration as an essentially human and fallible process whereby the ancient Hebrews searched for meaning in their own social and cultural contexts. Because the Hebrews were mere men and fallible, they were incapable of producing many "ready made answers," that is, eternally and universally valid truths which speak to the men of today as powerfully as they spoke to the men of ancient Israel. This being the case, we cannot read the Bible simply as teaching truth (its conclusions, recall, may be "imperfect and provisional"); we are rather to read it more as an exemplar of the sort of processes by which we ought to search for truth (which remains ever elusive).

It cannot be stressed enough that this view of Scripture is utterly alien to the patrimony of the Roman Catholic Church. The Church receives revelation as from the mouth of God Himself; the teachings of Scripture are eternally and immutably true, reaching across temporal, social, cultural, and linguistic boundaries to pierce the souls (cf. Heb 4:12) of men of every age and nation. Scripture's answers to life's questions most certainly are definitive, even in our modern "human condition."

Next, Kersten proceeds to deconstruct the Gospels:

A remarkable fact is that for a long time Christians misunderstood the literary genre of the four Gospels. Until recently they thought that the Gospel writers wanted to present us with a biography of Jesus. After much research, Bible scholars agree that the Gospel writers wanted to write catechisms or digests of Christian teaching concerning the risen Lord Jesus... The writers took [oral traditions] and frequently even remolded and refashioned them to bring out the lesson they wanted to teach... In the conflict stories of the Gospels it is usually Jesus who is in conflict with His opponents... Was Jesus involved in these conversations? Did He answer exactly as related in the Bible? It is not certain... Bible scholars tell us that a horoscope of the expected Messiah circulated during the time of Jesus' birth. Astrologers (wise men from the East) were watching the sky for the appearance of the Messiah's star. King Herod,

superstitious and upset by these people, killing children of two years and under, is extremely probable... People leaving Bethlehem to escape the massacre, is equally probable. This would be the historical background to this tradition. The rest is interpretation... Since we do not possess a biography of Jesus, it is difficult to know whether the words or sayings attributed to him are written exactly as He spoke them. True, the Gospels are based on sound historical facts as related by eyewitnesses, but both deeds and words of Jesus are offered to us in the framework of theological interpretation... Can we discover at least some words of Jesus that have escaped such elaboration? Bible scholars point to the very short sayings of Jesus... Another question is: Did Jesus sit on a hill and recite this list of sayings on the kingdom of heaven? It is the same question as: Did Moses sit on Mount Sinai writing the law? This composition is figurative... [T]he New Testament writers chose theological interpretation to teach what the risen Lord means to believers. Jesus' death, His resurrection, His ascension and the communication of the Spirit are actually *one* Christ event, that of his glorification... Remember the golden rule: keep historical facts distinct from their theological interpretation.⁵⁶

This section is so fraught with error that one hardly knows where to begin. Kersten finds it "remarkable" that Christians have misunderstood the literary genre of the four Gospels. Instead, I find it remarkable that he thinks he is right and all the Fathers and Doctors of the Church have been wrong.⁵⁷ St. Jerome was a fundamentalist.⁵⁸ St. Augustine was a fundamentalist.⁵⁹ And so on. All the Fathers had it wrong and it was not until the glorious dawning of those mystical lights of Germany: Schmidt, Dibelius, Bultmann, that Christians finally understood that the Gospels are theological elaborations and not literal history. All praise and all thanksgiving be to that Promethean nation which has transferred us out of darkness and into the kingdom of blessed Reason.

Well, this caveman, for one, is content to stay in his cave. St. Luke expressly states at the beginning of his Gospel (vv 1:1-4) that he intends to write history in the scientific sense: he investigated everything carefully and interviewed eyewitnesses with the intention of producing an account of the life of Christ which teaches the exact truth of what happened. What is this if not a "biography" or a work of "scientific history"?⁶⁰ Contrariwise, what compelling argument has Kersten presented us with which would convince us to abandon the literal-historical reading of the Gospels which is our patrimony?

Well, however many arguments Kersten possesses, he only presents us with one argument here: authority, specifically the authority of the ivory tower. He alleges a consensus of Bible scholars. But no such consensus exists. The field of Biblical scholarship is far from monolithic; Bible scholars span the entire theological spectrum and as such believe a myriad of contradictory ideas. Does Kersten include, within his supposed consensus of Bible scholars, Bauckham, Bruce, Carson, Metzger, Miguens, Wallace, or the Opus Dei scholars at Navarre?

Again, it is just baffling that Kersten refuses to see St. Matthew's infancy narrative as history. He here explains that the story is entirely plausible, even likely. Yet he still refers to the Gospel narrative as "theological interpretation" which he repeatedly contrasts with, and sets in opposition to, historical fact. Why? What grounds has he for doing so? How does reason make untenable reading this passage in the literal and obvious sense?⁶¹

Again, how can Kersten possibly know that "Jesus' death, His resurrection, His ascension and the communication of the Spirit," which the evangelists narrate as distinct historical events, are "actually *one* Christ event"? Is he an eyewitness? Does he possess superior testimony to the testimony of the evangelists themselves?

Finally, exactly how is one to distinguish theological interpretation from historical fact? According to Kersten the two are so woven together (the evangelists having concocted a great deal of their material on their own, and having drawn on traditions and sources whose authors had probably done the same), that

they are practically impossible to pull apart.⁶² According to him we cannot even know whether Jesus actually said the things that the Gospels say that He said! Thus any attempt to distinguish the two is an exercise in futility. 2000 years removed from the events, we simply cannot know; at best we can only guess that some of the shorter sayings of Jesus which the Gospels attribute to Him are truly His. Of course, there is a perfect remedy for this sorry state of affairs: like Christians have always done, take the Gospels at face value. Reject the reprobated ideas of the modernists⁶³ and fully embrace the teachings of the eternal Church. Yet, Kersten continues:

How does one know whether one deals with history or some form of figurative speech? To begin with, we should always be disposed to follow the teaching authority of the Church. We should also consult renowned Bible scholars who are experts in Hebrew literature... The signature of a bishop in your Bible assures you that opinions, expressed in footnotes and introductions, reflect what is generally accepted as sound doctrine in the Catholic tradition.⁶⁴

Given everything that Kersten has said so far, this assertion is quite amazing. He actually has the *chutzpah* to claim that he is faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church while simultaneously he directly dissents from *Providentissimus Deus, Pascendi Dominici Gregis, Lamentabili Sane, Spiritus Paraclitus, Divino Afflante Spiritu, Humani Generis*, Trent, Vatican I, every magisterial decree ever produced by the Pontifical Biblical Commission, and even Vatican II, properly interpreted. Liberal Scripture scholars are like little children who need to be reminded of their boundaries every day. A few years pass without a papal injunction in their activities and they take that as license to ignore all the previous. A few years pass without a papal reiteration of the perennial teaching of the Catholic Church on biblical inerrancy and they take that to mean that the perennial teaching has been rescinded. They seem to think that if the current Pope does not condemn their positions as heresy, that mitigates the fact that previous Popes, as recently as 50 years ago, have, and in no uncertain terms. The eternal Church truly is a fickle institution in their eyes!

Once again, it cannot be stressed enough that this view of Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church is utterly alien to Catholic Tradition. It accomplishes nothing save to drive souls away from Christ. It renders Catholicism indefensible vis-a-vis Protestant critiques.⁶⁵ Indeed, this doctrine exhibits, not Newman's "chronic vigour,"⁶⁶ but chronic sterility, as of a mutant or mongrel creature.

Kersten rounds out "How to Read Your Bible" by informing us that the first Christians mistakenly expected Christ's second coming during their lifetimes, and closes with some mumbo-jumbo about sharing an "existential understanding" with Moses because, in a way, we're captives too.

III. Prolegomena to Genesis

On February 27, 1934, the Pontifical Biblical Commission condemned a work entitled *Die Einwanderung Israels in Kanaan*, by the German Old Testament scholar R. D. Frederic Schmidtke. For Schmidtke, the Commission said, "in the volume mentioned above: in his treatment of the Pentateuch follows the opinions of rationalistic criticism to the complete neglect of the decree of the Pontifical Biblical Commission of June 27, 1906,"⁶⁷ that is, the decree "On the Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch." In this decree, the Biblical Commission had confirmed what it described as "the constant tradition of the Church" that Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible.⁶⁸ Because Schmidtke rejected this decree, among other reasons, the Commission concluded that "the aforesaid work deserves reprobation on various grounds and should be kept out of Catholic schools."⁶⁹

The same could be said of the NAB. The NAB too is thoroughly imbued with the opinions of rationalistic criticism, to the neglect of the analogy of faith, the teaching of the Magisterium, and the testimony of tradition.

Its treatment of the Pentateuch, specifically, is thoroughly imbued with the Documentary Hypothesis, also known as the Graf-Wellhausen Theory (after its 19th century liberal German Protestant authors). This theory posits that the Pentateuch is composed of four principal sources, termed Yahwist, Elohist, Deuteronomic, and Priestly, which were written between the time of Israel's united monarchy and the end of the Babylonian exile. Supposedly, various anonymous redactors wove these disparate sources together and made their own editorial revisions to produce the document which has come down to us today. This process is said to have been completed around the sixth century B.C.

While it might be possible to embrace this theory without essentially compromising the Catholic dogmas of biblical inspiration and inerrancy, and to successfully resolve the obvious tension between them, I do not envy the man who tries. Typically, and naturally, this theory goes hand in hand with the belief that the Pentateuchal narratives contain inconsistencies and other sorts of errors. Certainly, they go hand in hand in the NAB. Time after time the NAB scholars charge the text with contradiction, ascribing this to discrepancies between the various sources. Time after time they claim that bits and pieces of text have been moved around, and that verse 20 really belongs after verse 24, etc. In fact, these scholars have so little reverence for the Sacred Scriptures, if they believe they can identify the work of a redactor at some stage of the Pentateuch's textual history, they will not hesitate to insert contradictions into the text which they reckon him to have edited out.⁷⁰

The same rationalist principles lead the NAB to further unacceptable conclusions. Supposedly, when the Bible says "the Lord said to Moses" it does not actually mean that the Lord said to Moses whatever follows:

Even the later laws which have been added in P and D are presented as a Mosaic heritage. Moses is the lawgiver *par excellence*, and all later legislation is conceived in his spirit, and therefore attributed to him. Hence, the reader is not held to undeviating literalness in interpreting the words, "the Lord said to Moses."⁷¹

If this is the case, one wonders how many sayings the early church might have conceived in Jesus' spirit and then falsely attributed to Him. Though alas, my *reductio ad absurdum* will carry no weight with the scholars who produced the NAB, as they embrace the very absurdity that many of the sayings of Jesus in the Gospels were not said by Him at all.

A thorough critique of the Documentary Hypothesis and defense of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch is beyond the scope of this present work. So, if the reader wishes to pursue this issue he may consult a number of fine treatments by conservative scholars.⁷² For my part, I will confine myself to a brief exposition of the Pontifical Biblical Commission's arguments in favor of Mosaic authorship and to answering the arguments against it which are specifically presented by the NAB.

In its decree referenced above, the PBC mentions three principal arguments in favor of the position that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. **First**, it mentions "the cumulative evidence of many passages of both Testaments." Such passages include 2 Kings 14:6, which reads, "But the sons of the slayers he did not put to death, according to what is written in the book of the Law of Moses, as the LORD commanded, saying, 'The fathers shall not be put to death for the sons, nor the sons be put to death for the fathers; but each shall be put to death for his own sin.'" This passage quotes Deuteronomy 24:16, and attributes it to a document called "the Law of Moses." Similarly, Nehemiah 13:1-2 describes things which the Jews found written in the "book of Moses": things which we presently find written in Numbers and Deuteronomy. The Old Testament regularly references Moses as the author of the book of the Law, and contrariwise knows of no other individual or group of individuals who have edited it or added laws thereto.⁷³ We have no reason to suppose that the book of Moses which is mentioned in the Old Testament is any different from the Pentateuch which we possess today.

Naturally, Our Lord is of the same mind as the Scriptures He inspired. In Matthew 8:4, He attributes to Moses the laws concerning sacrifice in Leviticus 14. In Mark 7:10 He quotes, as the words of Moses, the Fourth Commandment. In Mark 12:26 He asks the Sadducees if they have not read the passage about the burning bush (Ex 3:6) "in the book of Moses." In John 5:46-47 Our Lord speaks of Moses' "writings," probably referring thereby to the whole Pentateuch.⁷⁴ St. Paul, likewise, in 1 Corinthians 9:9 quotes from Deuteronomy 25:4 as "the Law of Moses." In sum, every piece of evidence which the New Testament supplies indicates that its authors affirm the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.⁷⁵

Second, the PBC mentions "the unbroken unanimity of the Jewish people, and ... the constant tradition of the Church." The Talmud may be quoted as representative of Jewish tradition on this issue. "Who wrote the Scriptures? — Moses wrote his own book and the portion of Balaam and Job. Joshua wrote the book which bears his name and [the last] eight verses of the Pentateuch."⁷⁶ Clearly, the Talmud maintains that Moses wrote the entire Pentateuch, save his obituary which Joshua appended to Deuteronomy. The only dissenting opinion it records is that Moses wrote even the obituary. Incidentally, the substance of the Talmudic position holds good even supposing that Moses handed the pen to Joshua earlier than nine verses from the end of Deuteronomy, perhaps at Deuteronomy 31:24.

St. Augustine may be quoted as representative of the constant tradition of the Church. "Let me hear and understand how in the beginning Thou made the heaven and the earth. Moses wrote this."⁷⁷

Third, the PBC mentions, as evidence for Mosaic authorship, "the internal indications furnished by the text itself." The Pentateuch testifies many times that Moses wrote down the things it describes in a book.⁷⁸ Most explicitly, Deuteronomy 31:24 says that "Moses finished writing the words of this law in a book until they were complete." This testimony is inconsistent with the position enunciated by the NAB, that Moses did not complete the Jewish law, but that the Priestly and Deuteronomist sources added many laws thereto centuries after his death.

"To this we may add," as internal evidence for the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch,

the antiquated character of the style, which is common to all five books, and distinguishes them essentially from all the other writings of the Old Testament. This appears sometimes in the use of words, of forms, or of phrases, which subsequently disappeared from the spoken language, and which either do not occur again, or are only used here and there by the writers of the time of the captivity and afterwards, and then are taken from the Pentateuch itself; at other times, in the fact that words and phrases are employed in the books of Moses in simple prose, which were afterwards restricted to poetry alone; or else have entirely changed their meaning.⁷⁹

Keil lists, as concrete examples, changes in the use of pronouns, the spelling of the demonstrative pronoun, the construction of infinitive verbs, the conjugation of third person plural verbs, and vocabulary.⁸⁰ Most conclusively, Keil notes that the name "the Lord of hosts," Yahweh Sabaoth, is absent from the Pentateuch, even though it "was current as early as the time of Samuel and David, and so favourite a name with all the prophets."⁸¹ This datum is inconsistent with the supposition, required by the Documentary Hypothesis, that the Pentateuch was written concurrently with the prophets.

Those, briefly, are the grounds upon which the PBC affirmed the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Let us now move on to the NAB's reasons for adopting the contrary position.

In its introduction to the Pentateuch, the NAB presents the common argument that the Yahwist and Elohist authors can be distinguished by their respective preferences for the divine names Yahweh and Elohim. However, the two names have distinct shades of meaning and as such the Bible's variation between them can be explained as a function of the purposes of a single author, namely Moses. The

Bible uses the name Yahweh when it describes God in His intimate and relational aspect and uses Elohim when it describes God in His transcendent aspect. So, the preponderance of one divine name in one passage of Scripture and another divine name in another is no proof that these two passages were written by different people. Reformed Evangelical scholar John Currid summarizes the refutation of this rationalist critical argument:

It is clear that [the use of divine names] is not a reliable criterion in ancient Near-Eastern studies for determining different sources. In regard to Egyptian literature, Redford has carried out a detailed study of divine names and he concludes that '... in the main the genre of literature to which a piece belongs controls the choice and use of divine names and epithets'. The same is certainly true for Hebrew literature. For example, the book of Deuteronomy almost exclusively uses the name Yahweh, and the reason is that the material deals primarily with the covenant relationship between the Deity and the people. Genesis 1, on the other hand, only employs the name Elohim because there God is pictured as powerfully creating the universe *ex nihilo*. In addition, that fact that the Higher Critical presupposition that divine names can be used for source analysis does not hold true throughout the rest of the Bible (not just the Pentateuch) is lethal for the theory.⁸²

Moving on to the introduction to Genesis, the NAB posits that it was in fact the Priestly source (the last of the four principal sources to have been written) which added the legal institution of circumcision to the Pentateuch.⁸³ Our Lord, for His part, had no problem attributing this to Moses (John 7:22). Next, the NAB opines that the Elohist source exhibits a "greater sensitivity toward the moral order" than the Yahwist.⁸⁴ Are we given to understand, then, that the Yahwist is callous toward the moral order? Finally, the NAB asserts that the truths of Genesis 1-11 have been expressed through elements (presumably, historical and scientific elements) prevailing among the ancient Hebrews, which are clearly distinct from the truths themselves (and hence can be and frequently are erroneous *in se*).

To make the truths contained in [Genesis 1-11] intelligible to the Israelite people destined to preserve them, they needed to be expressed through elements prevailing among that people at that time. For this reason, the truths themselves must therefore be clearly distinguished from their literary garb.⁸⁵

This assertion is worded almost identically to the modernist position condemned by St. Pius X.⁸⁶ I will now document how the rationalistic principles which the NAB scholars endorse in these introductions play themselves out in their translation and in their commentary. I will, further, endeavor to vindicate the Church's traditional faith in the integrity, consistency, veracity, and Mosaic authorship of these books as against the NAB's claims. Indeed, I may, with slight interpolation, make my own the words of the Protestant scholar C. F. Keil:

For [the Pentateuch] cannot be shown to bear any traces of post-Mosaic times and circumstances; on the contrary, it has the evident stamp of Mosaic origin both in substance and in style. All that has been adduced in proof of the contrary by the so-called modern criticism is founded either upon misunderstanding and misinterpretation, or upon a misapprehension of the peculiarities of the Semitic style of historical writing, or lastly upon doctrinal prejudices, in other words, upon a repudiation of all the supernatural characteristics of divine revelation, whether in the form of miracle or prophecy. The evidence of this will be given in the [critique] itself, in the exposition of the passages which have been supposed [by the NAB] to contain either allusions to historical circumstances and institutions of a later age, or contradictions and repetitions that are irreconcilable with the Mosaic origin of the work.⁸⁷

IV. Genesis

One need not delve deeply into the NAB's rendering of Genesis to catch it undermining the Catholic faith. In fact, to be exact, one has only to read four words: "In the beginning, *when*." "In the beginning,

when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, etc." (Gen 1:1-2, NAB). This is opposed to the traditional rendering, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void, etc." (KJV).

The insertion of the one word "when" makes a critical difference. For in the traditional translation, it is clear that God creates the formless earth which is described at the beginning of the narrative. This supports the Catholic dogma that God created the world *ex nihilo*, that is, out of complete non-existence. On the other hand, in the NAB's rendition, the formless earth is not described as being the product of God's creative activity; rather, it is simply there when God begins to act upon it. This is consistent with the cosmogony of many of Israel's neighbors and of Plato's *Timaeus*, in which God creates the world by organizing pre-existent chaotic matter, that is, matter which He did not create Himself. Many scholars have attempted to attribute this view to the Bible.⁸⁸ And the NAB scholars' commentary seems to confirm the suspicion aroused by their translation that this is precisely their intent. "This section introduces the whole Pentateuch. It shows how God brought an orderly universe out of primordial chaos."⁸⁹ The next note only deepens our suspicions still further. Sadly, on this point, the heterodox exegete John Currid has expressed the true sense of the Scriptures more faithfully than these nominally Catholic ones:

In ancient Hebrew a variety of words expressed the idea of 'making' or 'forming'. These words may have either God or mankind as the subject (e.g., 3:21; Exod. 38:1-3). The subject of the verb *bara*, however, is only and always God; the word is never used of an action of mankind (in the active Qal stem, as it appears here). The reason for this is that man cannot create *ex nihilo*, but only out of a pre-existent matter. The verb *bara* was only used of God because only he could create that way (see Exod. 34:10; Isa. 65:17).⁹⁰

The NAB's second footnote, together with its translation of *raqiya* (traditionally, "firmament") as "dome," and the accompanying illustration supplied by The Catholic Books Publishing Company, strikes another blow against Catholic faith. That is, according to the NAB, the creation narrative in Genesis enunciates a primitive and erroneous cosmology. In this cosmology, the sky is a solid dome. This dome supports a body of water above. Rain falls when the gates of this dome open and allow the water above to fall through, etc. Rev. Victor P. Warkulwiz rebuts such claims:

The Hebrew word [*raqiya*] emphasizes strength and fixity, but it does not imply solidity. The most accurate translation is probably "expanse." The idea of a solid dome surrounding the earth probably comes from exegetes interpreting the beliefs of the Hebrews in terms of the beliefs of the Greeks.⁹¹

It may be additionally noted that v. 17 says that the celestial bodies are located within the firmament (not underneath it, as the NAB portrays). As even a primitive Hebrew could look up in the sky and see that the celestial bodies move around, this implies that the author of Genesis 1 believed it to be possible to move around within the firmament. This further reduces the credibility of the claim that the firmament is a solid dome. Warkulwiz continues:

Job 26:11 is cited to show that the Hebrews believed that the firmament rested on pillars... The verse declares: "The pillars of heaven tremble and are astounded at his rebuke." Obviously, it was not intended by the sacred author to be taken literally. How can pillars be "astounded"? Furthermore, nothing is mentioned about the pillars being mountains at the rim of the earth. Again, that's an embellishment. Besides, in Job 26:7, just a few verses earlier, it is written: "He stretches out the north over the void, and hangs the earth upon nothing." That doesn't sound like the earth resting on pillars! Next, Job 37:18, which is cited to show that the Hebrews believed the firmament is hard, is taken from a highly rhetorical passage that portrays the power of God. Elihu asks Job: "Can you, like him, spread out the skies, hard as a molten mirror?" That hardly supports the idea that the Hebrews believed that the sky was hard. The

hard mirror simile probably refers to the stability and reflective power of the sky. The "fine cloth or tent covering" is taken from similes in Psalms 104:2 and Isaiah 40:22 that are intended to convey the greatness of God and not the nature of the world.⁹²

In summary, there is no conclusive evidence that the Bible endorses a cosmology which is demonstrably false. Let's move on.

f. Gen. 1:26: "Man is here presented as the climax of God's creative activity; he resembles God primarily because of the dominion God gives him over the rest of creation."

f. Gen. 2:4b-25: "This section is chiefly concerned with the creation of man. It is much older than the narrative of Genesis 1:1-2:4a. Here God is depicted as creating man before the rest of his creatures, which are made for man's sake."

The documentary hypothesis strikes again. The disciples of Wellhausen who created the NAB insert a section title right in the middle of v. 2:4, thereby disrupting the clearly deliberate chiasmus by which Moses linked the preceding narrative to the succeeding. Ugly. For according to the JEDP theory, Genesis 1:1-2:4a belongs to the priestly source, and was created by Jews around the time of the Babylonian exile in attempts to convince themselves of the greatness of their God. Genesis 2:4b-25 is another story altogether, from a different tradition and a different age, which represents a different perspective in the Hebrews' quest for truth. Hence the NAB's disruption. Hence also the NAB scholars have no problem in charging the two narratives with a contradiction, namely that they present opposite orders of creation. In Gen 1, man is the last creature to be created, and in Gen 2 he is the first.

However, the two narratives may be brought into harmony. Regarding the allegation that the "second" story places the creation of plants after the creation of man: Genesis 1:11-12 and 2:5 are not dealing with the same categories of vegetation. Genesis 1:11-12 refers to "plants producing seed" and "fruit trees making fruit" whereas Genesis 2:5 refers to the "shrub of the field" and the "plant of the field" (Currid). I contend that "of the field" means "cultivated." Hence, as Genesis 1:11 records, plants existed before man; as Genesis 2:5 records, cultivated plants, i.e., crops, did not. The context of Gen 2:5 reinforces this contention. The statement "for there was no man to cultivate the ground" is a *non sequitur* if the shrubs and plants of the field here mentioned comprise all plants whatsoever (grass, bushes, trees, etc). Such plants do not need men to cultivate them! On the other hand, the statement is perfectly intelligible if we read it as, "no crops had yet sprouted... because there was no man to cultivate them." Thus are the two accounts harmonized.

The allegation that the "second" story places the creation of animals and birds after the creation of man may likewise be refuted. The word *wayyiser*, "formed," which is used in v. 2:19, is a Hebrew *wayyiqtol* construction (*waw* consecutive with imperfect), which we may, if the narrative logic so requires, understand as a pluperfect (so NIV, ESV, Currid; cf. Vulg, DRV). Thus v. 19 would read "And out of the ground the Lord God *had formed* every beast, etc." In this case, Gen 2:19 does not narrate the creation of animals and birds subsequent to the creation of man, but instead refers back to God's having created them at some earlier time, i.e., in Gen 1:20-25.

Thus this reading resolves the second aspect of alleged contradiction between Genesis 1 and 2. The only question which now remains is why Moses would express a pluperfect meaning with a *wayyiqtol* construction instead of with a more straightforward and obvious method. C. John Collins ventures an answer:

Perhaps the simplest explanation comes from the fact that both accounts are strongly anthropocentric: they see man as the pinnacle of God's creative work, the one for whom the earth and its animals exist. Putting the animals' formation in 2:19 directly after 2:18, where God sets about making a helper suitable

for the man, reinforces this point: even though physically the animals were made *before* man, yet conceptually their creation was in anticipation of their subservience to his governance, and therefore in God's mind the animals were a logical consequence of the making of man. Since Genesis 1 had established the physical order so that the audience would not mistake it, the author/editor was free to use this literary device to make this theological point.⁹³

Modern readers like to see everything in chronological order, and thus are tempted to see two different stories in narratives such as Genesis 1-2, which do not fit into our literary paradigm. However, this type of writing is fairly common in ancient near-eastern literature. Quite often such narratives start out with a broad overview of events (Genesis 1) and then take a step chronologically backward, and fill in the details (Genesis 2). The two chapters stand as a unified whole.

f. Gen. 3:15: "*He will strike... at his heel*: since the antecedent for he and his is the collective noun offspring, i.e., all the descendants of the woman, a more exact rendering of the sacred writer's words would be, "They will strike... at their heels." However, later theology saw in this passage more than unending hostility between snakes and men. The serpent was regarded as the devil (Wis 2:24; John 8:44; Rev 12:9; 20:2), whose eventual defeat seems implied in the contrast between head and heel. Because "the Son of God appeared that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8), the passage can be understood as the first promise of a Redeemer for fallen mankind. The woman's offspring then is primarily Jesus Christ."

In the matter of Genesis 3:15 the NAB scholars are not even consistent with their own principles. They heavily imply in this footnote that all the author of Genesis 3:15 intended to communicate was the origin of the "unending hostility between snakes and men." The messianic prophecy which "later theology" read into this passage which was not originally there. Well, do not the NAB scholars understand the duty of the translator to be to faithfully render into English what the original author actually said? Why then do they obscure the original meaning of Genesis 3:15 with an admittedly less than exact rendering, which reflects the eisegesis of later theology rather than the text itself?

God knows. In any case, I feel compelled to defend the NAB's translation of Genesis 3:15 from the NAB's charge of inaccuracy. The pronoun in question is the Hebrew *hu*, a singular pronoun which is quite ambiguous and can mean either he, she, or it (or in rare instances they, cf. Ex 1:10). So, in order to determine the correct rendering we must examine the preceding sentence or clause to find the antecedent noun to which the pronoun refers. In this particular context, there are only two nouns that might be the antecedent to *hu*, namely the woman (*ha-ishah*) and the offspring/seed (*zar'ah*).

The NAB translators overstate their case when they claim that *zar'ah* bears a plural sense in this passage and refers to all the descendants of the woman. While *zar'ah* usually refers to plural descendants (cf. Gen 16:10; 22:17; 24:60), it can also refer to an individual (cf. Gen 4:25; 21:13). Moreover, if it bore a plural sense in this passage we would expect it to be accompanied by plural pronouns and verbs, as in Gen 15:13-14. Unless *hu* refers to the woman, however, the seed is accompanied by singular pronouns and verbs. In which case, the singular sense is more likely.

The primary weakness of the position that *hu* refers to the woman is that the verb "shall crush" (*yeshufcha*) is masculine, and verbs normally agree with their subject in gender. Yet, it is possible for a feminine subject to take a masculine verb.

So, the three contenders for the antecedent to *hu*, namely the woman, the seed understood in a singular sense, and the seed understood in the plural sense, each bear some linguistic difficulty. In my limited judgment, the difficulty seems least if we take *hu* to refer to seed in the singular sense, in which case we would render the passage, "he shall crush your head." On the other hand, the testimony of tradition,

which cannot be neglected, favors the rendering "she." But regardless of whether the most accurate rendering is "he" or "she," the ecclesiastical writers are vindicated who

taught that by this divine prophecy the merciful Redeemer of mankind, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, was clearly foretold: That his most Blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary, was prophetically indicated; and, at the same time, the very enmity of both against the evil one was significantly expressed.⁹⁴

Contrariwise, if, as the NAB claims, "they" is the most accurate representation of what the sacred writer actually intended to say, then Gen 3:15 is not a clear prophecy of the Redeemer. Indeed, according to the NAB, it is merely a pedestrian just-so story about the origin of the "unending hostility between snakes and men" into which later theology eisegeted redemption.

f. Gen. 4:17-22: "In Genesis 4:12-16 Cain was presented as the archetype of nomadic peoples. The sacred author in this section follows another ancient tradition that makes Cain the prototype of sedentary peoples with higher material culture."

Once again the documentary hypothesis bears its rotten fruit: the translators charge Scripture with another contradiction. In one tradition, Cain is a nomad, cursed to be a vagabond and a wanderer on the earth (4:12), and in another, he is a man of civilization, building the world's first city (4:17). Perhaps it did not occur to the NAB translators that Cain built his city in *opposition* to the divine command recorded in v. 4:12. Indeed, according to Josephus, Cain procured the wealth of his city by robbery.⁹⁵

f. Gen. 4:25f: "...At the time... name: men began to call God by his personal name, Yahweh, rendered as "the LORD" in this version of the Bible. The ancient, so-called Yahwist source used here employs the name Yahweh long before the time of Moses. Another ancient source, the Elohist (from its use of the term Elohim, "God," instead of Yahweh, "Lord," for the pre-Mosaic period), makes Moses the first to use Yahweh as the proper name of Israel's God, previously known by other names as well; cf Exodus 3:13-15."

This alleged contradiction could easily be harmonized by simply positing that the name YHWH fell out of use during the time the children of Israel spent in Egypt, and that it was at the burning bush that the use of God's personal Name was restored. Sadly, in the NAB, historical criticism trumps faith every time.

f. Gen. 6:1-4: "This is apparently a fragment of an old legend that had borrowed much from ancient mythology..."

That which is apparent to the NAB is by no means apparent to Catholic tradition, which regards as an error the proposition that the Old Testament contains mythical inventions.⁹⁶ On the contrary, upon application of the analogy of faith, it is not difficult to understand this passage, not as an adventitious fragment, but as an integral part of the consistent and factual Genesis narrative. The "sons of God" mentioned here are the men of the godly lineage of Seth, whereas the "daughters of men" are the daughters of Cain.⁹⁷ This interpretation is consistent with biblical usage which describes the people of God as sons of God (cf. Deut 32:5; Ps 73:15; 80:17; Hos 1:10), and situates this passage squarely within the general thrust of the Genesis narrative, which is the parallel development of, in St. Augustine's terms, the city of God and the city of man. Furthermore, the sons of God cannot be celestial beings because no being except a man can join a woman in marriage (cf. v. 6:2).

f. Gen. 9:18-27: "This story seems to be a composite of two earlier accounts; in the one, Ham was guilty, whereas, in the other, it was Canaan. One purpose of the story is to justify the Israelites' enslavement of the Canaanites because of certain indecent sexual practices in the Canaanite religion..."

It is also possible that Noah punished Ham vicariously by cursing his son Canaan. This would make perfect sense in the context. Ham, the youngest son, had dishonored his father Noah, so Noah decreed that Ham's youngest son would dishonor him.

Note as well, that the NAB here, like Kersten in the introduction, accuses Scripture of the moral abomination of spinning tales in order to justify Hebrew war crimes.

f. Gen. 10:1-32: "...This chapter is a composite from the Yahwist source (Genesis 10:8-19, 21, 24-30) of about the ninth century B.C., and the Priestly source (Genesis 10:1-7, 20, 22-23, 31-32) of a few centuries later. That is why certain tribes of Arabia are listed under both Ham (Genesis 10:7) and Shem (Genesis 10:26-28)..."

The documentary hypothesis rears its ugly head once again. The translators see two names repeated within a few chapters, and they immediately think contradiction. According to the Priestly source, Sheba and Havilah are descendents of Ham, but according to the Yahwist, they are descendents of Shem. But is it really that unlikely that there were two people named Sheba and two people named Havilah? The NAB is second only to the *Skeptic's Annotated Bible* in its relentless search for contradictions which are simply not there.

f. Gen. 11:10-26: "...Although the ages of the patriarchs in this list are much lower than those of the antediluvian patriarchs, they are still artificial and devoid of historical value..."

Given that the NAB dismisses the biblical data on this subject without argument, or at least without argument they see fit to share, one wonders on what basis they do so.

f. Gen. 12:3: "*Shall find blessing in you*: the sense of the Hebrew expression is probably reflexive, "shall bless themselves through you" (i.e., in giving a blessing they shall say, "May you be as blessed as Abraham"), rather than passive, "shall be blessed in you." Since the term is understood in a passive sense in the New Testament (Acts 3:25; Gal 3:8), it is rendered here by a neutral expression that admits of both meanings..."

To assert that the Old Testament "probably" means one thing, *rather than* what the inspired Apostles Peter and Paul taught that it means,⁹⁸ while understandable on the lips of a Jew or a secularist, is, on the lips of an ostensibly believing Christian, simply arrogance of gargantuan proportions. It is equivalent to claiming that one "probably" understands Scripture better than Scripture. Contrast the authentically Christian humility of St. Augustine, who, when he determined that his exegesis of the Old Testament was out of conformity with apostolic exegesis, promptly conformed it.⁹⁹

f. Gen. 12:16: "*Camels*: domesticated camels probably did not come into common use in the ancient Near East until the end of the 2nd millennium B.C. Thus the mention of camels at the time of the patriarchs... is seemingly an anachronism."

Witness once again the perfidy of the NAB: the Bible says that Abraham had domesticated camels in Egypt; the Bible is probably wrong. Once again a faithful Catholic will do much better to turn to a Protestant author than to the NAB for commentary consistent with Catholic doctrine:

The reference in the passage to camels is not anachronistic. Recent studies indicate an early date for the domestication of camels in the Middle East. It appears by around 2700 B.C. in the Persian Gulf region and by 2600 / 2500 B.C. in the Iranian Plateau. Although domestication and herding of camels may have not been common for all peoples of the Near East, it certainly was for the elite, or upper classes of society.¹⁰⁰

Obviously, seven hundred years is more than enough time for the domestication of camels to have spread from the Persian Gulf to Egypt.

f. Gen. 14:13: "*Abram the Hebrew*: elsewhere in the Old Testament, until the last pre-Christian centuries, the term "Hebrew" is used only by non-Israelites, or by Israelites in speaking to foreigners, since it evidently had a disparaging connotation--something like "immigrant." The account in this chapter may, therefore, have been taken originally from a non-Israelite source, in which Abraham, a warlike sheik of Palestine, appears as a truly historical figure of profane history."

Contrary to the NAB's assertion, the term "Hebrew" is used by the biblical narrator to refer to the Israelite nation in contrast with foreigners (cf. Gen 43:32; Ex 2:11), not solely when speaking to foreigners. Its appearance in Genesis 14:13 is consistent with this usage. Furthermore, there is no need to suppose that the term is pejorative. It simply means descendants of Eber (cf. Gen 10:21; 11:14,16).¹⁰¹

Note also how little is left of the biblical Abraham after the demythologizing of the NAB. Considered as a "truly historical" figure he is merely a "warlike sheik of Palestine." The NAB posits a radical disparity between the Abram of history and the Abraham of faith.

This is part and parcel of the disparity which the NAB posits between sacred history and profane history in general. It is only profane history which is "truly historical." Sacred history has a more or less loose relationship therewith. This is opposed, of course, to how Catholic Tradition understands the term sacred history, namely that part of actual history which is recorded by the Bible.¹⁰²

f. Gen. 21:14: "*Placing the child on her back*: the phrase is translated from an emended form of the Hebrew text. In the current faulty Hebrew text, Abraham put the bread and the waterskin on Hagar's back, while her son apparently walked beside her. This reading seems to be a scribal attempt at harmonizing the present passage with the data of the Priestly source, in which Ishmael would have been at least fourteen years old when Isaac was born; compare Gn 16, 16 with 21, 5; cf 17, 25. But in the present Elohist story Ishmael is obviously a little boy, not much older than Isaac; cf vv 15, 18."

Here the NAB does what Bart Ehrman does best: engage in tendentious textual criticism whose tendency is opposite Christian orthodoxy. Christian orthodoxy affirms the internal coherence of the biblical narratives. The NAB denies. As such, orthodox Christians will naturally favor the reading of Gen 21:14 in the Hebrew and Latin Bibles, in which this text coheres with the data of Gen 16:16; 21:5, whereas the NAB favors the reading of the Septuagint, in which it does not. Thus is the NAB distinguished from an orthodox Christian Bible.

The NAB supports its textual decision by claiming that it is obvious from vv. 15, 18 that Ishmael is only a little boy in the present story (as opposed to the adolescent he ought to be based on Gen 16:16; 21:5). Not so. Verse 15 says that Sara left Ishmael under a bush. This is perfectly consistent with Ishmael being a teenage boy *who is dying of dehydration*. It is perhaps surprising that Ishmael should succumb to dehydration sooner than his mother, but not entirely implausible. Perhaps Ishmael was chivalrous and insisted that his mother drink more water than he. Next, in verse 18, the Angel of God urges Hagar to lift Ishmael up and hold him by the hand. This, again, is perfectly consistent with his being fifteen.

f. Gen. 26:6-11: "*The Yahwist's version of the wife-sister episode at Gerar; the Elohist's version (Genesis 20:1-18) is connected with Abraham and Sarah.*"

It seems to be an entrenched dogma of those who adhere to the JEDP theory that whenever Genesis contains two similar stories, they must really be two different versions of the same story, written by

different authors and then redundantly concatenated in the canonical text. They claim the same thing about the two stories of the wells at Beer-Sheba. Does history never repeat itself?

f. Gen. 36:31: "*Before any king reigned over the Israelites: obviously this statement was written after the time of Saul, Israel's first king.*"

On the contrary, Moses write this, aware of the promise that God had made to Abraham and Jacob (cf. Gen 17:16; 35:11) that kings would come from their loins. Moses knew that Israel would be reigned over by kings (cf. Deut 17:14-15). Moreover, given that God had also promised that the descendants of Esau would serve the descendants of Jacob (cf. Gen 25:23), it was quite natural that Moses would find it remarkable that Edom had become a kingdom and had been ruled by a succession of kings while Israel was still without a homeland.

f. Gen. 37:21-36: "*The chapter thus far is from the Yahwist source, as are also Genesis 37:25-28a. But Genesis 37:21-24 and Genesis 37:28b-36 are from the Elohist source. In the latter, Reuben tries to rescue Joseph, who is taken in Reuben's absence by certain Midianites; in the Yahwist source, it is Judah who saves Joseph's life by having him sold to certain Ishmaelites...*"

f. Gen. 37:28: "*They sold Joseph... silver: in the Hebrew text, these words occur between out of the cistern and (they) took him to Egypt at the end of the verse.*"

In this instance the NAB scholars' emendation is pure conjecture. Without support from the Hebrew, the Septuagint, the Syriac, or the Vulgate, they have changed the text of Scripture in order to reinforce their perceived contradiction. This emendation qualifies as a perversion.

Essentially, they see two conflicting stories weaved together in Genesis 39. In the Yahwist story, Judah convinces his brothers to sell Joseph to some Ishmaelite traders instead of killing him. In the Elohist story, on the other hand, Reuben convinces his brothers to throw Joseph into a cistern, intending to return and rescue him at a later time. However, before he can do so Joseph is kidnapped by Midianites. Because the NAB scholars believe they can detect elements of incoherence between these two disparate stories, they believe they are justified in sharpening that incoherence by reversing what they perceive as a clumsy editorial attempt to blend the two stories into a consistent whole.

So, my task is to demonstrate that the Hebrew *textus receptus* contains absolutely no elements of incoherence, and thus that there is no need to suppose two conflicting source stories and no justification for a conjectural emendation. In that vein, the first part of the NAB's allegation of contradiction, namely that in the "two" stories it is a different one of Joseph's brothers who tries to save his life, is inane. It is not inconceivable that two of Joseph's brothers could have balked at the prospect of murdering him, and conceived independent plans to save his life.

The second part, namely that in one story Joseph is sold to the Ishmaelites whereas in the other he is kidnapped by Midianites, is a bit more difficult, especially if one relies solely on the NAB. This is where the translators change the Scripture to reinforce their views. They rearrange the verse into two neat, contradictory parts. The first part says that Joseph's brothers sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. The second says that some Midianite traders passed by, pulled Joseph out of the cistern, and took him to Egypt. However, the NASB translates the verse literally: "Then some Midianite traders passed by, so they [Joseph's brothers] pulled him up and lifted Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. Thus they brought Joseph into Egypt." Obviously this is quite a different statement. It becomes clear that Moses is simply using the names Ishmaelite and Midianite interchangeably, to refer to the same group of people. The Bible also uses these names interchangeably in Judges 8:22-24.¹⁰³

f. Gen. 42:27-28: "These two verses are from the Yahwist source, whereas the rest of the chapter is from the Elohist source, in which the men find the money in their sacks (not "bags"--a different Hebrew word) only when they arrive home (v 35); cf Gen 43:21."

While sacks and bags are indeed two different Hebrew words, their semantic domains surely overlap, just as the English words sack and bag, and as such can be used interchangeably, as they are here.

There is a legitimate difficulty in this passage. If, as Gen 43:21 says, all the brothers found their money in their sacks on the journey home, why do they express surprise at finding their money in their sacks when they arrive? Currid thinks the brothers staged this event in order to impress upon their father the gravity of the situation.¹⁰⁴ This seems a reasonable supposition to me.

f. Gen. 45:9-15: "In these verses, as in Genesis 46:31-47:5a, all from the Yahwist source, Joseph in his own name invites his father and brothers to come to Egypt. Only after their arrival is Pharaoh informed of the fact. On the other hand, in Genesis 45:16-20, from the Elohist source, it is Pharaoh himself who invites Joseph's kinsmen to migrate to his domain."

The NAB reads Genesis 46:31-47:5a as an account of Pharaoh being informed of unexpected guests in his kingdom. It could also be read as an account of Pharaoh being informed that his instructions had been executed - the guests whom he had invited had arrived - and inquiring for additional information about them. Similarly, the NAB reads Genesis 45:16-20 as an account of Pharaoh conceiving, independently of Joseph, the plan to invite Joseph's kinsmen to Egypt. It could also be read as an account of Pharaoh confirming and adding detail to Joseph's plan.

V. Exodus

The second book of the Pentateuch is called Exodus (Greek, departure), because it tells the story of the exodus of the Hebrews from the land of Egypt. Under the leadership of Moses, the sons of Israel are freed from slavery to Pharaoh and experience God's providential care as they journey through the wilderness to the Promised Land.

One of the salient features of this book, which we believe on the testimony of Tradition to have been written by Moses,¹⁰⁵ is the miraculous way in which God provides for His people. He parts the Red Sea so they can cross over on dry land; He provides them meat for their journey; He sends them miraculous bread from heaven to sustain them; He supplies miraculous water from the rock to quench their thirst.

The NAB commentary, ever skeptical, repeatedly casts doubt on the reality of these miracles. Rather than simply affirming that God intervened in the order of nature, the NAB instead suggests natural explanations for these phenomena which seem to obviate such intervention. Granted, the NAB does not forthrightly assert that the "miracles" of Exodus are mere natural phenomena, as Schmidtke did, and was rebuked for doing.¹⁰⁶ But the NAB leaves the reader with that impression nonetheless.

f. Exod. 7:14: "Most of the ten plagues of Egypt seem to be similar to certain natural phenomena of that country; but they are represented as supernatural at least in their greater intensity and in their occurring exactly according to Moses' commands."

Modernists frequently refuse to be dogmatic. Rather than take a firm stance one way or the other, they prefer to hint and suggest, to dance around their true position. They state that the ten plagues are "represented" as supernatural by the author of Exodus. But is his representation accurate? Or is he exaggerating? Recall that according to the NAB, the Bible is frequently inaccurate in its representation of things.

f. Exod. 10:19: "*The Red Sea*: according to the traditional translation, but the Hebrew is literally, "the Reed Sea"; hence the Red Sea of Exodus was probably a body of shallow water somewhat to the north of the present deep Red Sea."

So the Jews merely crossed a "body of shallow water" on their escape from Egypt. How shallow? Shallow enough to wade through? So much for the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea, if that is the NAB's meaning. Of course, this simply raises the question of how Pharaoh's armies managed to drown themselves in this "shallow water," which would seem to be a greater miracle than the parting of the Red Sea itself.

Whatever the NAB's meaning, there is generous exegetical support for the traditional identification of the biblical *Yam Suf* with the body of water presently known as the Red Sea. First, we read in Exodus 10:14 the Lord made locusts swarm over the whole land of Egypt and settle down on every part of it. Then, in v. 19 we read that the Lord sent a strong west wind which cast the locusts into the *Yam Suf*. If the *Yam Suf* were a lake situated to the north of the Gulf of Suez, then a west wind would not drive locusts from all over Egypt into it. Rather, a west wind would drive the locusts primarily into the Red Sea. Second, 1 Kings 9:26 and Numbers 21:4 both indicate that the *Yam Suf* includes the present day Gulf of Aqaba. This indicates that the ancient Hebrews identified the *Yam Suf* as the entire body of water which surrounds the Sinai Peninsula to the south, i.e., the Red Sea. Third, Numbers 33:8-10 records that, after passing through the midst of the sea, the Jews traveled three days' journey to Marah, then traveled to Elim, then traveled again and camped by the *Yam Suf*. No body of water in the vicinity, besides the Red Sea, is sufficiently large that the Jews would still be on its coast after so much traveling. Finally, while *suf* can mean "reed" it may also mean "seaweed." This is consistent with the proposition that the *Yam Suf* refers to the Red Sea.

f. Exod. 10:21: "*Darkness*: at times a storm from the south, called the *khamsin*, blackens the sky of Egypt with sand from the Sahara; the dust in the air is then so thick that the darkness can, in a sense, 'be felt.'"

Once again the NAB appears to suggest that what Scripture portrays as a supernatural event might only have been a natural phenomenon. When Exodus informs us that God caused darkness to overshadow the land - a pitch-black darkness at that - the NAB seems to imply that it might have only been "a storm from the south" that darkened the sky "with sand from the Sahara," which is no great miracle at all. Of course, this is the polar opposite of how Scripture itself understands this passage, as Wisdom of Solomon ch. 17 describes this event in the most vivid and explicitly supernatural terms. The darkness is said to come from the pits of hell itself, while the Egyptians are tormented by demonic apparitions.

f. Exod. 16:4: "*Bread from heaven*: as a gift from God, the manna is said to come down from the sky. Cf Psalm 78:25; Wisdom 16:20. Perhaps it was similar to a natural substance that is still found in small quantities on the Sinai peninsula, but here it is, at least in part, clearly miraculous..."

Did the manna really fall, in a miraculous fashion, from the heavens? The NAB concedes that it "is said to come down from the sky." But is the saying true? The NAB further concedes that "here it is, at least in part, clearly miraculous," yet given its consistent attacks on the veracity of the biblical narratives I am still left with the suspicion that by "here" the NAB means, "in this narration, which does not necessarily correspond to historical reality."

f. Exod. 22:1-2: "*If a thief is caught*: this seems to be a fragment of what was once a longer law on housebreaking, which has been inserted here into the middle of a law on stealing animals... *He must make full restitution*: this stood originally immediately after Exodus 21:37."

The NAB commentators seem to be incapable of making it through one book of the Bible without suggesting once or twice that it was written, compiled, and edited by several people over an extended period of time. Moreover, as usual, they make no attempt to justify their assertion.

f. Exod. 29:27-30: "These verses are a parenthetical interruption of the ordination ritual; Exodus 29:31 belongs logically immediately after Exodus 29:26."

f. Exod. 29:38-42: "A parenthesis inserted into the rubrics for consecrating the altar; Exodus 29:43 belongs directly after Exodus 29:37."

This is yet more unwarranted commentary on the purely human editing process that shaped the book of Exodus. One need only read the passages in question to realize that the NAB commentators are unjustified in their breezy certainty regarding where these verses originally went or where they "logically" belong. Well did St. Pius X say of them:

"The traces of [the redaction process], [the modernists] tell us, are so visible in the books that one might almost write a history of them. Indeed this history they do actually write, and with such an easy security that one might believe them to have with their own eyes seen the writers at work through the ages amplifying the Sacred Books. To aid them in this they call to their assistance that branch of criticism which they call textual, and labour to show that such a fact or such a phrase is not in its right place, and adducing other arguments of the same kind. They seem, in fact, to have constructed for themselves certain types of narration and discourses, upon which they base their decision as to whether a thing is out of place or not. Judge if you can how men with such a system are fitted for practicing this kind of criticism"¹⁰⁷

The sacred text is perfectly coherent as it stands.

Ben Douglass
February 5, Anno Domini MMIX

[1] Leo XII, *Ubi Primum* (May 5, 1824), 17, in Claudia Carlen, IHM, ed., *The Papal Encyclicals, Vol. I* (Ann Arbor, MI: The Pierian Press, 1990) pp. 199-203.

[2] Pius VIII, *Traditi Humilitati* (May 24, 1829), 5, in Carlen, *op. cit.*, pp. 221-224.

[3] Gregory XVI, *Inter Praecipuas* (May 8, 1844), 2, in Carlen, *op. cit.*, pp. 267-271. In this encyclical, Gregory also references letters of Pope Pius VII to the archbishops of Gniezno (June 1, 1816) and Mohilev (September 4, 1816)

[4] Bl. Pius IX, *Qui Pluribus* (November 9, 1846), 14, in Carlen, *op. cit.*, pp. 277-284.

[5] Bl. Pius IX, *Nostis et Nobiscum* (December 8, 1849), 14, in Carlen, *op. cit.*, pp. 295-303.

[6] Leo XIII, *Officiorum ac Munerum* (January 25, 1897), III, 7-8, in *The Great Encyclical Letters of Pope Leo XIII* (New York, NY: Benziger Brothers, 1903) pp. 407-421.

[7] All quotations in this article, unless otherwise indicated, will be from the *Saint Joseph Edition of the New American Bible* (New York, NY: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1992), hereafter, *The St. Joseph NAB*.

[8] Cf. *DeRev*; *PD*, 20-21; *LS*, 11; *SP*, 13, 19, 21; Pius XII, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, 3; *HG*, 22. St. Irenaeus beautifully sums up the faith of the Church when he states, simply, "the Scriptures are indeed perfect, since they were spoken by the Word of God and His Spirit" (*Against Heresies*, Book II, Ch. 28, Par. 2, in *ANF*, Vol. I, p. 399).

[9] St. Francis de Sales, *The Catholic Controversy*, trans. Henry Benedict Mackey, O.S.B. (Rockford, IL: TAN Books, 1989) p. 88.

[10] Oecumenius, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, trans. John H. Suggit [Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006] p. 108.

[11] As Leo XIII warned, "[T]he young, if they lose their reverence for the Holy Scripture on one or more points, are easily led to give up believing in it altogether" (*PD*, 18).

[12] The NAB boasts one imprimatur for the original translation of the whole Bible (1970), one for the revised New Testament (1986), and one for the revised Psalms (1991).

[13] It must be noted that Paul VI's blessing applies only to the original version of the NAB, not to the revised New Testament and Psalms, which were completed after his death. Furthermore, it is unclear to what extent Pope Paul VI personally examined the text and commentary of the NAB before granting it his blessing. English was not his strongest language. Paul VI himself taught the orthodox, Catholic doctrine of Scripture. Cf. Rev. Brian W. Harrison, O.S., *The Teaching of Pope Paul VI on Sacred Scripture* (Rome: Pontificium Athenaeum Sanctae Crucis, 1997).

[14] "The New American Bible," http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0839/_INDEX.HTM, 11/11/2002.

[15] Cf. St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life* (Rockford, IL: TAN Books, 1994) p. 208.

[16] *SJNAB*, p. [42]. The *SJNAB*, for some reason, paginates the front matter with numbers in brackets, rather than with the standard Roman numerals. This author is tempted to speculate that the cause is to be traced to the anti-Roman attitude.

[17] The *SJNAB* has given prominent Muslim apologist Shabir Ally this false impression ("Confessions of the New American Bible," http://www3.sympatico.ca/shabir.ally/new_page_19.htm). Ally, as is his custom, seizes upon this product of liberal "Christian" scholarship in order to attack the Bible.

[18] Pius XII, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, 37. This analogy is particularly useful because it contains within itself the refutation of all attempts to limit or circumscribe Scripture's inerrancy. Some, for instance, will argue that Scripture is only inerrant when it treats of certain subject matters such as faith or morals; others will argue that Scripture is only inerrant as regards its overall salvific purpose, not as regards particular details; still others will argue that Scripture is only inerrant in what it *asserts*, i.e., in what it says with deliberate reflection and with explicit intention to teach, as opposed to what it merely *states*, casually, carelessly, and in passing (*obiter dicta*). I pose the following questions to proponents of these theories. Is Christ only sinless with respect to certain categories of sin? Is Christ only sinless as regards His overall purpose to redeem the human race, as opposed to being free of all particular sins? Is Christ only sinless when He acts with full knowledge and deliberate consent, such that it is possible to impute to Him involuntary, venial faults? I submit that each proposition described above is equally heretical.

[19] *DeRev*, Par. 5. The description of biblical inspiration as divine "dictation" is well attested in the patristic, conciliar, and papal sources. Cf. St. Augustine, *Harmony of the Gospels*, Book I, Ch. 35; St. Gregory the Great, *Moralia, or Commentary on the Book of Blessed Job*, Preface, 2; The Council of

Trent, Session 4, Decree Concerning the Canonical Scriptures; *PD*, 5, 20; Benedict XV, *In Praeclara Summorum*, 5; *SP*, 8; Pius XII, *Menti Nostrae*, 42.

[20] *PD*, 1.

[21] *Ibid.*, 20. Benedict XV says much the same thing in *SP*, 8-9: "You will not find a page in [St. Jerome's] writings which does not show clearly that he, in common with the whole Catholic Church, firmly and consistently held that the Sacred Books - written as they were under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit - have God for their Author, and as such were delivered to the Church. Thus he asserts that the Books of the Bible were composed at the inspiration, or suggestion, or even at the dictation of the Holy Spirit; even that they were written and edited by Him. If we ask how we are to explain this power and action of God, the principal cause, on the sacred writers we shall find that St. Jerome in no wise differs from the common teaching of the Catholic Church. For he holds that God, through His grace, illumines the writer's mind regarding the particular truth which, 'in the person of God,' he is to set before men; he holds, moreover, that God moves the writer's will - nay, even impels it - to write; finally, that God abides with him unceasingly, in unique fashion, until his task is accomplished." St. Pius X condemns the contrary proposition in *LS*, 9: "They display excessive simplicity or ignorance who believe that God is really the author of the Sacred Scriptures."

[22] *SJNAB*, p. [18].

[23] Cf. *PDG*, 22.

[24] *SJNAB*, p. [18].

[25] Vatican II Dogmatic Constitution, *Dei Verbum* (On Divine Revelation), Ch. 3, Par. 11.

[26] *SJNAB*, p. [18].

[27] *DeRev*, Pars. 6-7; *Dei Verbum*, Ch. 3, Par. 11.

[28] *SJNAB*, p. [18].

[29] *HG*, 22. Cf. *SP*, 19: "For while conceding that inspiration extends to every phrase - and, indeed, to every single word of Scripture - yet, by endeavoring to distinguish between what they [the modernists] style the primary or religious and the secondary or profane element in the Bible, they claim that the effect of inspiration - namely, absolute truth and immunity from error - are to be restricted to that primary or religious element. Their notion is that only what concerns religion is intended and taught by God in Scripture, and that all the rest - things concerning 'profane knowledge,' the garments in which Divine truth is presented - God merely permits, and even leaves to the individual author's greater or less knowledge. Small wonder, then, that in their view a considerable number of things occur in the Bible touching physical science, history and the like, which cannot be reconciled with modern progress in science!"

[30] Cf. Luke Timothy Johnson, "The Bible's Authority for and in the Church" in William P. Brown, ed., *Engaging Biblical Authority* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007) pp. 62-72.

[31] Since God is simple, His attributes are identical with His essence. Therefore the statements "God is justice" and "God is love" (1 John 4:8) are equally true.

[32] St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, Q. 100, Art. 8, ad 3 (New York, NY: Benziger Brothers, Inc.: 1947). For a helpful, if incomplete, explanation of God's purposes in ordering the Jews to destroy the pagan nations of Canaan, see Roy Schoeman, *Salvation is from the Jews* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2003) pp. 46-51. See also Bishop Richard Challoner's comment on 1 Samuel 15:3, cited *infra*, footnote 114.

[33] *SJNAB*, p. [19].

[34] Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited* (New York, NY: Knopf, 1993) pp. 122-123.

[35] *SJNAB*, p. [19].

[36] *Ibid.*, p. [24]. Cf. *LS*, condemned proposition 64: "Scientific progress demands that the concepts of Christian doctrine concerning God, *creation*, revelation, the Person of the Incarnate Word, and Redemption be re-adjusted." Emphasis mine.

[37] Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is a famous example of this genre.

[38] *SJNAB*, p. [19].

[39] Council of Trent, Sess. V, Canon 1.

[40] St. Pius X, *Motu Proprio Praestantia Scripturae* (Acta Sanctae Sedis [1907] 724ff; Enchiridion Biblicum 278f; Denzinger 2113f): "We now declare and expressly enjoin that all without exception are bound by an obligation of conscience to submit to the decisions of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, whether already issued or to be issued hereafter, exactly as to the decrees of the Sacred Congregations which are on matters of doctrine and approved by the Pope; nor can anyone who by word or writing attacks the said decrees avoid the note both of disobedience and of rashness or be therefore without grave fault" (in *CCHS*, p. 67).

[41] Decree "Concerning the Historical Character of the First Three Chapters of Genesis" (Acta Sanctae Sedis 1 [1909] 567ff; Enchiridion Biblicum 332ff; Denzinger 2121ff): "II: Notwithstanding the historical character and form of Genesis, the special connection of the first three chapters with one another and with the following chapters, the manifold testimonies of the Scriptures both of the Old and of the New Testaments, the almost unanimous opinion of the holy Fathers and the traditional view which the people of Israel also has handed on and the Church has always held, may it be taught that: the aforesaid three chapters of Genesis contain not accounts of actual events, accounts, that is, which correspond to objective reality and historical truth, but, either fables derived from the mythologies and cosmogonies of ancient peoples and accommodated by the sacred writer to monotheistic doctrine after the expurgation of any polytheistic error; or allegories and symbols without any foundation in objective reality proposed under the form of history to inculcate religious and philosophical truths; or finally legends in part historical and in part fictitious freely composed with a view to instruction and edification? Answer: In the negative to both parts. III: In particular may the literal historical sense be called in doubt in the case of facts narrated in the same chapters which touch the foundations of the Christian religion: as are, among others, the creation of all things by God in the beginning of time; the special creation of man; the formation of the first woman from the first man; the unity of the human race; the original felicity of our first parents in the state of justice, integrity, and immortality; the command given by God to man to test his obedience; the transgression of the divine command at the instigation of the devil under the form of a serpent; the degradation of our first parents from that primeval state of innocence; and the promise of a future Redeemer? Answer: In the negative" (in *CCHS*, pp. 68-69).

[42] "When, however, there is question of another conjectural opinion, namely polygenism, the children of the Church by no means enjoy such liberty. For the faithful cannot embrace that opinion which maintains that either after Adam there existed on this earth true men who did not take their origin through natural generation from him as from the first parent of all, or that Adam represents a certain number of first parents. Now it is no way apparent how such an opinion can be reconciled with that which the sources of revealed truth and the documents of the Teaching Authority of the Church propose with regard to original sin, which proceeds from a sin actually committed by an individual Adam and which, through generation, is passed on to all and is in everyone as his own... [T]he first eleven chapters of Genesis, although properly speaking not conforming to the historical method used by the best Greek and Latin writers or by competent authors of our time, do nevertheless pertain to history in a true sense, which however must be further studied and determined by exegetes; the same chapters... in simple and metaphorical language adapted to the mentality of a people but little cultured, both state the principal truths which are fundamental for our salvation, and also give a popular description of the origin of the human race and the chosen people. If, however, the ancient sacred writers have taken anything from popular narrations (and this may be conceded), it must never be forgotten that they did so with the help of divine inspiration, through which they were rendered immune from any error in selecting and evaluating those documents" (*HG*, 37-38).

[43] *SJNAB*, p. [20].

[44] St. Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. Maria Boulding, O.S.B. (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1998) p. 80.

[45] *PD*, 18.

[46] St. Pius X, in *PDG* 36, condemned the following modernist error: "In the Sacred Books there are many passages referring to science or history where manifest errors are to be found. But the subject of these books is not science or history but religion and morals. In them history and science serve only as a species of covering to enable the religious and moral experiences wrapped up in them to penetrate more readily among the masses. The masses understood science and history as they are expressed in these books, and it is clear that had science and history been expressed in a more perfect form this would have proved rather a hindrance than a help." He had this to say about the modernist position: "We, Venerable Brethren, for whom there is but one and only truth, and who hold that the Sacred Books, *written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, have God for their author* (Conc. Vat., De Revel., c. 2) declare that this is equivalent to attributing to God Himself the lie of utility or officious lie, and We say with St. Augustine: *In an authority so high, admit but one officious lie, and there will not remain a single passage of those apparently difficult to practice or to believe, which on the same most pernicious rule may not be explained as a lie uttered by the author willfully and to serve a purpose* (*Epist. 28*)" (*ibid.*, 37, italics his; cf. *SP*, 19).

[47] *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Book I, Ch. 21, Par. 41, quoted in *PD*, 18.

[48] Some have attempted to distinguish between the sacred authors' "assertions" and their mere "statements", such that the former are guaranteed to be immune from all error, whereas the latter are not. Such persons argue that the author of Genesis 1 made a number of erroneous statements about cosmology in passing, which he assumed were true but which he did not explicitly intend to teach. Thus, he stated, but did not assert, that God created the earth in six days, for example.

This is a fatuous distinction. There is no sound, objective criterion by which one might determine which statements the Biblical authors truly "affirmed," and as such this distinction leads to exegetical anarchy. Furthermore, in addition to being unworkable, this distinction is theologically impossible as well.

Humans may enunciate careless *obiter dicta* which, upon reflection, we realize that we do not stand behind; God, however, does not, and He is the author of the entire Scripture. Finally, Holy Mother Church has rejected this distinction, and when she did so, she certainly did intend to teach. According to "the Catholic dogma of the inspiration and inerrancy of the Sacred Scriptures... everything affirmed, stated, or implied by the sacred writers must be held as affirmed, stated or implied by the Holy Spirit" [...*dogmate item catholico de inspiratione et inerrantia sacrarum Scripturarum, quo omne id, quod hagiographus asserit, enuntiat, insinuat, retineri debet assertum, enuntiatum, insinuatum a Spiritu Sancto*]. Vatican II's Constitution *Dei Verbum*, in its first footnote to Article 11, cites two documents which make this statement: Biblical Commission, Decree of June 18, 1915: Denzinger 2180 (3629): EB [Enchiridion Biblicum] 420; Holy Office, Epistle of Dec. 22, 1923: EB 499. The translation quoted above is from Rev. Brian W. Harrison, O.S., "The Truth and Salvific Purpose of Sacred Scripture according to *Dei Verbum*, Article 11," *Living Tradition*, No. 59 (1995).

St. Gregory of Nazianzus likewise refutes the contention that Scripture contains unaffirmed *obiter dicta* when he states, "We however, who extend the accuracy of the Spirit to the merest stroke and tittle, will never admit the impious assertion that even the smallest matters were dealt with haphazard by those who have recorded them" ("Oration II," par. 105, in *NPNF*, Ser. II, Vol. VII, p. 225).

[49] *SJNAB*, p. [20].

[50] *Ibid.*

[51] *Ibid.*

[52] *Ibid.*

[53] "The Psalmist contrasts the felicity of the conqueror, with the misery of the citizens, without approving of his conduct" (W. F. Berthier, in *HOT*, p. 794).

[54] *SJNAB*, p. [20].

[55] *SJNAB*, p. [21].

[56] *SJNAB*, pp. [21]-[24].

[57] "To hear [the modernists] talk about their works on the Sacred Books, in which they have been able to discover so much that is defective, one would imagine that before them nobody ever even glanced through the pages of Scripture, whereas the truth is that a whole multitude of Doctors, infinitely superior to them in genius, in erudition, in sanctity, have sifted the Sacred Books in every way, and so far from finding imperfections in them, have thanked God more and more the deeper they have gone into them, for His divine bounty in having vouchsafed to speak thus to men. Unfortunately, these great Doctors did not enjoy the same aids to study that are possessed by the Modernists for their guide and rule, - a philosophy borrowed from the negation of God, and a criterion which consists of themselves" (*PDG*, 34).

[58] "Jerome maintains that belief in the Biblical narrative is as necessary to salvation as is belief in the doctrines of the faith; thus in his Commentary on the Epistle to Philemon he says: 'What I mean is this: Does any man believe in God the Creator? He cannot do so unless he first believe that the things written of God's Saints are true.' He then gives examples from the Old Testament, and adds: 'Now unless a man believes all these and other things too which are written of the Saints he cannot believe in the God of the Saints' (S. Jerome, *In Philem.*, 4)" (*SP*, 24).

[59] "As to Enoch and Elias and Moses, our belief is determined not by Faustus' suppositions, but by the declarations of Scripture, resting as they do on foundations of the strongest and surest evidence... To give you in a word, without argument, the true reason of our faith, as regards Elias having been caught up to heaven from the earth, though only a man, and as regards Christ being truly born of a virgin, and truly dying on the cross, our belief in both cases is grounded on the declaration of Holy Scripture, which it is piety to believe, and impiety to disbelieve... The reason of our believing Him to have been born of the Virgin Mary, is not that He could not otherwise have appeared among men in a true body, but because it is so written in the Scripture, which we must believe in order to be Christians, or to be saved" (St. Augustine, *Reply to Faustus the Manichaeon*, Book XXVI, Pars. 3, 6, and 7, in *NPNF*, Ser. I, Vol. IV, pp. 321, 323).

[60] Greek historians often introduced their works with a brief note on their methodology and intentions, much like Luke 1:1-4. One wonders if Arrian intended to write a catechism of Alexander the Great, or Thucydides a catechism of the Peloponnesian War (cf. *The Campaigns of Alexander*, 1:1; *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1:22).

[61] This is the only possible justification for departing from a literal hermeneutic, according to the rule laid down by St. Augustine and confirmed by Leo XIII in *PD*, 15.

[62] "What can we say of men who in expounding the very Gospels so whittle away the human trust we should repose in it as to overturn Divine faith in it? They refuse to allow that the things which Christ said or did have come down to us unchanged and entire through witnesses who carefully committed to writing what they themselves had seen or heard. They maintain - and particularly in their treatment of the Fourth Gospel - that much is due of course to the Evangelists - who, however, added much from their own imaginations; but much, too, is due to narratives compiled by the faithful at other periods, the result, of course, being that the twin streams now flowing in the same channel cannot be distinguished from one another" (*SP*, 27).

[63] St. Pius X, in *LS*, condemned the following propositions: "13. The Evangelists themselves, as well as the Christians of the second and third generation, artificially arranged the evangelical parables. In such a way they explained the scanty fruit of the preaching of Christ among the Jews. 14. In many narrations the Evangelists recorded, not so much things that are true, as things which, even though false, they judged to be more profitable for their readers. 15. Until the time the canon was defined and constituted, the Gospels were increased by additions and corrections. Therefore there remained in them only a faint and uncertain trace of the doctrine of Christ." In *PDG*, 34, he directly attacked the notion of the Gospels having been created by transfiguring actual history with theological interpretation: "The result of this dismembering of the Sacred Books and this partition of them throughout the centuries is naturally that the Scriptures can no longer be attributed to the authors whose names they bear. The Modernists have no hesitation in affirming commonly that these books, and especially the Pentateuch and the first three Gospels, have been gradually formed by additions to a primitive brief narration - by interpolations of theological or allegorical interpretation, by transitions, by joining different passages together."

[64] *SJNAB*, pp. [24]-[25].

[65] Protestants have often alleged that (a) the teachings of the Catholic Church cannot be infallible because they are not consistent over time, and (b) the Church's claim to be under the authority of the Word of God is disingenuous. If Kersten's description of Catholicism were accurate, both of these criticisms would be true, for in his view, (a) the Church's teaching on Scripture has changed, and (b) the Church can correct what is erroneous in Scripture.

[66] John Henry Cardinal Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (London: Basil Montagu Pickering, 1878) pp. 203ff.

[67] AAS 26 [1934] 130f, in *CCHS*, p. 74.

[68] On the Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch (ASS 39 [1906-07] 377f; EB 174ff; Dz 1997ff): "I: Are the arguments gathered by critics to impugn the Mosaic authorship of the sacred books designated by the name of the Pentateuch of such weight in spite of the cumulative evidence of many passages of both Testaments, the unbroken unanimity of the Jewish people, and furthermore of the constant tradition of the Church besides the internal indications furnished by the text itself, as to justify the statement that these books are not of Mosaic authorship but were put together from sources mostly of post-Mosaic date? Answer: In the negative" (in *CCHS*, p. 68).

[69] AAS 26 [1934] 130f, in *CCHS*, p. 74.

[70] E.g., at Gen 37:28. Contrast the authentic Scriptural piety of St. Augustine: "For I confess to your Charity that I have learned to yield this respect and honor only to the canonical books of Scripture: of these alone do I most firmly believe that the authors were completely free from error. And if in these writings I am perplexed by anything which appears to me opposed to truth, I do not hesitate to suppose that either the manuscript is faulty, or the translator has not caught the meaning of what was said, or I myself have failed to understand it" (St. Augustine, Letter 82:3). St. Augustine saw apparent inconsistency as evidence of textual corruption. The NAB scholars see apparent harmonization as evidence of textual corruption.

[71] *SJNAB*, p. 1.

[72] Cf. Umberto Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis* (Jerusalem, Israel: Shalem Press, 2006); Duane Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis: The Sources and Authorship of the First Book of the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991); Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1996).

[73] Cf. Josh 1:7–8; 8:32–34; Judg 3:4; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 21:8; 2 Chron 25:4; Ezra 6:18; Neh 8:1; Dan 9:11–13.

[74] Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John, Vol. 2* (New York, NY: The Seabury Press, 1980) p. 129.

[75] Cf. also Matt 19:7–8; Luke 24:27, 44; John 1:17; 7:19; Acts 6:14; 13:39; 15:5; 2 Cor 3:15; Heb 10:28.

[76] Baba Bathra 14b, Soncino edition. "The portion of Balaam" refers to Balaam's oracles in Numbers 23-24.

[77] *Confessions*, Book XI, Ch. 3.

[78] Cf. Ex 17:14; 24:4–7; 34:27; Num 33:2; Deut 31:9, 22, 24.

[79] *KD*, Vol. 1, p. 11.

[80] *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

[81] *Ibid.*, pp. 10.

[82] John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Genesis, Volume 1* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2003) pp. 29-30.

[83] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[84] *Ibid.*

[85] *Ibid.*

[86] Cf. *supra*, footnote 45.

[87] *KD*, Vol. 1, p. 9.

[88] Cf. Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1988).

[89] *SJNAB*, p. 4.

[90] Currid, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

[91] Rev. Victor P. Warkulwiz, M.S.S., *The Doctrines of Genesis 1-11* (New York, NY: iUniverse, 2007) p. 42.

[92] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

[93] C. John Collins, "The *Wayyiqtol* as 'Pluperfect': When and Why," *Tyndale Bulletin* 46.1 (1995) 117-140.

[94] Bl. Pope Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*.

[95] *Antiquities of the Jews*, Bk. I, Ch. 2, Par. 2.

[96] Bl. Pope Pius IX, *The Syllabus of Errors*, 7.

[97] "*The sons of God*. The descendants of Seth and Enos are here called *Sons of God* from their religion and piety: whereas the ungodly race of Cain, who by their carnal affections lay groveling upon the earth, are called the children of men. The unhappy consequence of the former marrying with the latter, ought to be a warning to Christians to be very circumspect in their marriages; and not to suffer themselves to be determined in their choice by their carnal passion, to the prejudice of virtue or religion." (Bishop Richard Challoner, in *HOT*, p. 20)

[98] It would of course be perfectly legitimate to assert that the Old Testament means something *in addition to* what the inspired Apostles taught that it means. However, to assert that it means one thing *rather than* what the Apostles taught implies that the Apostles found a meaning there which was not there in fact, and hence interpreted incorrectly.

[99] *Retractationes*, 1:9:3.

[100] Currid, *op. cit.*, p. 262. Currid cites P. Wapnish, 'Camel Caravans and Camel Pastoralists at Tell Jemmeh', *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 13 (1981): 101-21.

[101] *Ibid.*, p. 280.

[102] For example Sulpicius Severus, in *Sacred History*, takes it for granted that sacred history is just as rooted in fact as the profane variety: "I address myself to give a condensed account of those things which are set forth in the sacred Scriptures from the beginning of the world and to tell of them, with distinction of dates and according to their importance, down to period within our own remembrance. Many who were anxious to become acquainted with divine things by means of a compendious treatise, have eagerly entreated me to undertake this work. I, seeking to carry out their wish, have not spared my labor, and have thus succeeded in comprising in two short books things which elsewhere filled many volumes. At the same time, in studying brevity, I have omitted hardly any of the facts... I will not shrink from confessing that, wherever reason required, I have made use of profane historians to fix dates and preserve the series of events unbroken, and have taken out of these what was wanting to a complete knowledge of the facts, that I might both instruct the ignorant and carry conviction to the learned" (*Sacred History*, 1:1). Cf. *SP*, 22: "Those, too, who hold that the historical portions of Scripture do not rest on the absolute truth of the facts but merely upon what they are pleased to term their relative truth, namely, what people then commonly thought, are - no less than are the aforementioned critics - out of harmony with the Church's teaching, which is endorsed by the testimony of Jerome and other Fathers."

[103] Midian was Abraham's son by his wife Keturah, and Ishmael his son by Hagar, so Midianites are not Ishmaelites technically. However, it is possible that Ishmaelite became a generic term for all tribes descended from Abraham besides Israel, and is used in this sense here. Another possibility, which the NAB itself entertains in its footnote to Judges 8:24, is that Ishmaelite can denote nomads, in addition to its more specific ethnic specification.

[104] John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Genesis, Volume 2* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2003) pp. 291-292.

[105] Cf. *supra*, "Prolegomena to Genesis."

[106] This was among the reasons cited by the Pontifical Biblical Commission for its decision to reprobate *Die Einwanderung Israels in Kanaan*. The Commission stated: "doing violence to the sacred texts, [Schmidtke] explains many miracles of the Old Testament as purely natural events" (AAS 26 [1934] 130f, in *CCHS*, p. 74).

[107] *PDG*, 34.

PART II

VI. 1 Samuel

The NAB pulls its usual tricks in the First Book of Samuel. There is a bit of demythologizing, one (that I have detected) deliberate mistranslation, a claim that the book was compiled by a faceless editor rather than written by the man whose name it bears, and, as always, many allegations of contradiction and error, in one case even of moral error. I will here attempt to refute them. Now, I may only be one layman, fighting against an array of polyglot doctored priests, but I will draw inspiration from the story of David and Goliath, which, incidentally, is contained in 1 Samuel, and, trusting in David's intercession, attempt an upset victory.

f. 1 Sam. 2:1-10: "A hymn attributed to Hannah, the mother of Samuel, as her thanksgiving to God because she has borne a son despite her previous sterility..."

Notice that this hymn is only "attributed to Hannah, the mother of Samuel." God forbid that we say Hannah actually recited these words!

f. 1 Sam. 8:1: "From this chapter on, the First Book of Samuel gives us two and sometimes three viewpoints on most of the events with which it is concerned, such as the appointment of Saul as king, the reasons for his downfall, his relationship with David, even the circumstances of Saul's death (1 Sam 31; 2 Sam 1). The choice of Saul as king is seen, in 1 Sam 8, followed by 1 Sam 10:17-27 and 1 Sam 12 as motivated by the people's defection from the proper service of God; this later editorial approach incorporates not only narratives with which it is consistent, but also early traditions (1 Sam 9:1-10, 16 and 1 Sam 11) which portray the events and their motivation quite differently."

These allegations of contradiction are entirely baseless. First, the idea that 1 and 2 Samuel contain irreconcilable reports of Saul's death is about as inane as these types of claims come. 1 Samuel records what actually happened; 2 Samuel records what an Amalekite *said* happened. The Amalekite was lying. He made up a story in hopes of garnering from King David some type of reward.¹¹⁰ However, his plan backfired, and David executed him.

Second, the alleged contradiction between 1 Samuel 16:19-23 and 1 Samuel 17:55-58, regarding whether or not Saul knew David prior to his battle with Goliath, can also be satisfactorily reconciled. David was a young boy when he served as Saul's armor bearer (vv. 16:19-23), and the Scripture does not tell us how much time elapsed between the events narrated in ch. 16 and the events narrated in ch. 17. Perhaps months or even years passed, and David's appearance changed significantly in that time. Perhaps he grew his first beard. "Furthermore," Merrill adds, "Saul's mental and emotional condition, always aberrational at best, would certainly have been aggravated in this hour of stress, perhaps to the point of his not recognizing even an old friend."¹¹¹

I will deal with the claim regarding the disparate accounts of Saul's accession to power in detail below.

f. 1 Sam. 10:5: "*In a prophetic state*: in an ecstatic condition due to strong feelings of religious enthusiasm induced by a communal observance, possibly accompanied by music and dancing."

Rather than attribute the "prophetic state" to a movement of God's Spirit, the NAB suggests that it is merely "an ecstatic condition due to strong feelings of religious enthusiasm induced by a communal observance." This is redolent of the Modernist principle of vital immanence, which explains every religious experience as internal "feelings of religious enthusiasm" rather than supernatural grace.¹¹² Religious experience comes from within, in this view, and is induced by natural, psychological means: the Hebrew prophets whip themselves up into a frenzy like the priests of Ba'al.

f. 1 Sam. 10:8: "By inserting this verse, with its seven days, an editor has prepared for one narrative of the rejection of Saul (1 Sam 13:8-15) in the very context of Saul's anointing."

Again, without evidence or argument, the NAB scholars simply assert that "an editor" inserted this verse. How, pray tell, do they know?

f. 1 Sam. 11:12-14: "With these verses, an editor has harmonized the account of the acknowledgment of Saul as king at Mizpah (1 Sam 10:17-24) with the public acclamation at Gilgal (1 Sam 11:15) after the defeat of the Ammonites (1 Sam 11:1-11)..."

The ubiquitous "editor" strikes again, this time to harmonize two allegedly disparate accounts. In the one, teaches the NAB, Saul is enthroned at Mitzpah after being chosen by lot, whereas in the other he is enthroned at Gilgal after saving the Jews of Jabesh-gilead. But the text as it stands is a unified whole. There is quite simply no contradiction there. Saul is chosen for king by lot at Mitzpah (vv. 10:20f), but many of the Jews do not accept him (v. 10:27). However, after he demonstrates his leadership by winning a decisive military victory (vv. 11:1-11), he gains the people's unqualified support, so the prophet Samuel decides to renew the kingdom by repeating the coronation rites. There is no need to posit two disparate sources, and one desperate editor; the narrative is perfectly coherent as is.

What is more, the NAB has deliberately mistranslated Scripture in v. 11:14 in order to make their charge of contradiction seem more plausible. The NAB scholars, alone in the wide field of biblical translation, have chosen to render *chadash* in this verse as inaugurate, instead of "reaffirm" (NIV), "renew," (NAS, KJV, DRV, RSV), *egkainidzo* (LXX, renew, cf. 1 Mac 4:36; Ps 50:12; Sir 36:6), or the like. And given that they translate the word properly elsewhere,¹¹³ this error cannot be ascribed to incompetence. It is evident that they have purposely chosen to mistranslate *chadash* in order to **make** Scripture to be in error. As I explained above, they believe that vv. 10:24ff and 11:15 were originally two independent and contradictory accounts of Saul's one-and-only coronation, but that an editor weaved them together and attempted to harmonize them by positing that, while both events happened, the second rite of coronation was merely a renewal of the first. But the NAB scholars have seen through the editor's thin veneer; they have pierced the scrim and descried the original, contradictory sources from which the final product was made; they know that 1 Samuel 11:14f did not originally describe a "renewal" of Saul's kingship but the inauguration thereof, therefore they are perfectly justified in manhandling and mistranslating the word of God, that we might be able to see as clear as they.

f. 1 Sam. 15:3: "...The interpretation of God's will here attributed to Samuel is in keeping with the abhorrent practices of blood revenge prevalent among pastoral, seminomadic peoples such as the Hebrews had recently been. The slaughter of the innocent has never been in conformity with the will of God."

Here the NAB outright charges Scripture with a moral error. Samuel, speaking as God's prophet, tells Saul that God wishes him to "attack Amalek" and to kill all the "men and women, children and infants," yet the NAB scholars blatantly assert that this "has never been in conformity with the will of God." Evidently, they believe they know the mind of God better than inspired Scripture, which is God speaking.¹¹⁴

Ironically, the liberal Catholics of yesteryear attempted to open the Bible to charges of scientific and historical error by carving for it a limited domain of inerrancy, viz., matters of faith and morals.¹¹⁵ Observe how at present they wax bolder and more radical in their attenuation of the ancient faith: now Scripture contains moral errors as well. Indeed, Fr. Raymond Brown went so far as to assert that the Bible contains erroneous "time-conditioned religious beliefs."¹¹⁶ This progression is illustrative that the liberals must not be given an inch with respect to the doctrine of the Bible; else there will be nothing left by and by.

f. 1 Sam. 16:14: "An evil spirit sent by the LORD: the Lord permitted Saul to be tormented with violent fits of rage."

This is more demythologizing. What the Bible narrates as supernatural, the NAB explains as natural. Saul was not actually possessed or obsessed by a fallen angel with an intellect and will, but only "tormented with violent fits of rage." The Douay, by contrast, takes this passage at face value.¹¹⁷

f. 1 Sam. 17:54: "At the time supposed by this narrative, Jerusalem was still Jebusite, and David had no military tent of his own; the verse is a later gloss."

Judges 1:21 records that the Benjaminites attempted to take Jerusalem, but were unable to completely dislodge the Jebusites. This resulted in the Benjaminites and Jebusites dwelling side by side. As such, at "the time supposed by this narrative," part of Jerusalem would have been under Benjaminite control. As for David's "tent," this need not refer to a military tent; the Hebrew word *ohel* may refer simply to a dwelling place (cf. vv. 4:10; 13:2), in this case David's house in Bethlehem.¹¹⁸ These two facts being established, the NAB's argument that this verse is a later gloss collapses.

May he who harps God for us in the eagle-eye win grace for the vindication of His word.¹¹⁹

VII. Daniel

Daniel is the kind of book by which the martyr's ardor is fanned to flame. Its heroes are men of exemplary courage and piety, preferring to be cast into a raging furnace or a den of lions rather than bow before false gods. They endure persecution with humility and contrition, all the while thanking the Lord for sending them such just chastisements for their sins. And they triumph, and for their fidelity they receive from God their just reward.

Hence, as the great soldier-priest Mattathias died, wishing to encourage his sons to "show zeal for the law, and give your lives for the covenant of our fathers" (1 Macc 2:50), he called to their minds (after the deeds of Abraham and others) the deeds recorded in this book. "Hannaniah, Azariah, and Mishael believed and were saved from the flame. Daniel because of his innocence was delivered from the mouth of the lions. And so observe, from generation to generation, that none who put their trust in him will lack strength" (vv. 59-61).

Moreover, Daniel is the kind of book with which souls are won. Its historical prophecies are exquisite in their precision, predicting hundreds of years of history in great detail. In fact, Daniel is probably the best book in the entire Bible for proving divine inspiration to the nonbeliever, for it even identifies by name the nations to which some of its prophecies refer. Yet more extraordinarily, in places the book of Daniel even provides the time frames in which the events it describes will transpire. It is truly an awe inspiring work.

David Goldstein, the secular Jew turned Catholic evangelist, describes how the book of Daniel moved him to embrace the Christian faith:

Especially was I impressed with the prophecy of Daniel, in which he foretold the exact time when the vision and the prophecy would be fulfilled; when the Saint of Saints would be anointed; when the Messiah would be here, in accordance with God's promise, for in the fullness of that time Christ our Lord was born.¹²⁰

Suffice to say, the NAB vitiates Daniel. Yet again it espouses the claims of the enemies of Christianity; it teaches that Daniel was written in the second century B.C. during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, after the events which it "predicts" had already transpired.¹²¹ This view devastates the moral and prophetic force of this book. Suddenly the fingerprints of divine foreknowledge and inspiration which are the visions of statues, animals, and horns are no more than creative summaries of past history. Suddenly this book of amazing foresight has none at all, and even its hindsight is in question. Suddenly this motive of credibility does not seem so credible.

Thankfully, the preponderance of the internal and external evidence is not on the NAB's side. **First**, the author explicitly and repeatedly identifies himself as Daniel, the same Daniel who experienced the events narrated in this book (vv. 7:28; 8:1,15,27; 9:2; 12:4-5). This does not convince the NAB, which insists that this "book takes its name, not from the author, who is actually unknown, but from its hero."¹²² But what about the author's repeated and insistent self-identification is so difficult to

understand? If Daniel were not indeed the author of Daniel, this would not be pseudonymity but *pseudoi*, lies.

Second, Daniel is mentioned by his sixth century B.C. contemporary Ezekiel, as one renowned for wisdom and righteousness (Ezek 14:14, 20; 28:3). Ezekiel even expected the King of Tyre to know of him, which presupposes that Daniel was a well known figure among pagans as well as Jews.

The NAB, to avoid the force of this argument, must insist that Ezekiel is talking about a different Daniel. "The Daniel named here may be the traditional just judge of the ancient past, celebrated in Canaanite literature... but is not the hero of Dn 1-12."¹²³ This objection approaches absurdity. Ezekiel mentions Daniel alongside Noah and Job as men who exemplify the righteousness by which men save themselves and others from destruction. The prophet Daniel was particularly apt for inclusion in this list, for by his righteousness he had saved himself and his friends from death at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar (vv. 2:17-18), just as Noah had saved his family from the flood and Job had preserved himself and his wife from the attacks of Satan. On the other hand, the Daniel described in the Canaanite Ras Shamra tablets is a worshipper of Ba'al, and hence Ezekiel could not have considered him righteous in the same sense as Noah and Job.¹²⁴ Why, for that matter, would Ezekiel include a pagan in his list of righteous men, when he could have included Joseph or Moses? Furthermore, it strikes me as too convenient for the NAB's position that the Bible should be entirely silent about this other Daniel until just the time at which, according to the traditional position, the prophet Daniel came to prominence.

Third, Our Lord taught that the prophecies contained in the book of Daniel were spoken by the prophet named Daniel (Matt 24:15). Here we see once again that the NAB scholars apparently will not allow Jesus' authority to extend to literary criticism. Finally, subsequent tradition is unanimous in attributing Daniel to its protagonist, as witnessed by Josephus¹²⁵ and St. Jerome.¹²⁶

Since the NAB makes no attempt in its introduction to justify its claim that Daniel was written during the Maccabean Rebellion, I will here explain and refute some of the arguments which have historically been advanced in favor of this position. The first is that the prophecies are too accurate, and hence could not possibly have been composed until after the events they describe had already occurred. This argument, obviously, rests on a false premise.

The second argument is that the Aramaic of Daniel, which contains loan words from Greek and Persian, belongs to the second and not the sixth century B.C. However, the three Greek words each name musical instruments which were played before Nebuchadnezzar's golden image (vv. 3:5,7,10,15). Given the contact which existed between the Greek and Babylonian civilizations,¹²⁷ it is not at all surprising that Nebuchadnezzar should have possessed Greek musical instruments at his court. Next, Daniel's use of Persian words is sufficiently explained by his surviving several years after the Persian conquest of Babylon, during which time many Persian loan words passed into Aramaic.¹²⁸ Kenneth Kitchen demonstrates conclusively that Daniel's Aramaic can be dated anywhere from the late sixth (its traditional date of composition) to the second century B.C., and probably precedes the third century B.C.¹²⁹

Finally, it is alleged that Daniel contains historical mistakes which an eyewitness to these events would not have made. Yet recent discoveries have vindicated this divinely inspired work. For example, the Babylonian king Belshazzar who is mentioned throughout the book was until recently otherwise unknown to history. None of the great historians of antiquity such as Xenophon and Herodotus were aware of him; they knew only of Nabonidus and preceding kings. In the past this led many to deny the historical reliability of Daniel. However, the recently discovered Nabonidus Chronicle reports that Nabonidus entrusted the kingship to his son, the crown prince Bel-shar-usus (Belshazzar) while he spent several years absent in Arabia. Belshazzar was ruling in Babylon as de-facto king at the time that

Babylon fell.¹³⁰ Now, as the great historians of antiquity are completely unaware of this king, it is abundantly evident that his memory faded into obscurity soon after his kingdom was destroyed. Hence it would be highly improbable that this information would have been known to an obscure Maccabean Jew who was three hundred years yet further removed from these events than the aforementioned historians. Second century B.C. folk narrators do not typically know more of sixth century B.C. history than fifth century B.C. historians. Hence, the most natural explanation of the data is that Daniel was there. He was an eyewitness to these events, and he wrote down what he saw.

The other main charge of historical inaccuracy centers on the character of Darius the Mede, who, according to Daniel, succeeded to the kingdom of Babylon at the age of 62. It is an established fact of history that the Persian king Cyrus conquered Babylon. Moreover, Cyrus had already overthrown the Median sovereign a few years before. So it is problematic that Daniel describes a man named Darius the Mede as becoming king over Babylon upon its fall. However, the Nabonidus Chronicle records that Cyrus appointed a man named Gubaru as sub-governor of Babylon immediately after it came under his power. It is possible that Darius the Mede was simply another name for him.¹³¹ Yet another possible explanation is supplied by D. J. Wiseman, who has argued that Darius the Mede was Cyrus himself.¹³² Cyrus was 62 when he conquered Babylon, his mother was a Mede, and ancient Near Eastern Kings often bore more than one name. Hence Wiseman translates Dan 6:28 appositionally: "Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, even (namely, or i.e.) the reign of Cyrus the Persian." This solution appears best.

f. Dan. 2:1-49: "The chronology of Daniel 2:1 is in conflict with that of Daniel 1:5, 18 and in Daniel 1:25 Daniel appears to be introduced to the king for the first time..."

Supposedly vv. 1:5 and 1:18 put the first meeting between Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel during the third year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, whereas 2:1 puts it in the second. However, according to the Babylonian reckoning, "the year in which a king was crowned was the year of accession, whereas the next full year was the first year of his reign."¹³³ This alleged contradiction melts away as soon as one learns that historical fact. Nebuchadnezzar took Daniel to Babylon during the year of his accession, and three years later, when Daniel's training was complete, it was the second year of his reign. So we see that the two chronologies can be harmonized quite easily. Moreover, far from being evidence of historical inaccuracy, this is actually evidence that Daniel was written by a Babylonian, not a Maccabean Jew, for a Maccabean Jew would not have used Babylonian dates. This is especially true with regards to Daniel 1:1, where the use of the Babylonian reckoning puts him in *prima facie* contradiction to Jeremiah (cf. Jer 25:1, 9; 46:2).

f. Dan. 2:2: "*Chaldeans*: here probably astrologers, who were so associated with the Chaldeans in the Hebrew mind that in the later language they are sometimes simply called by the name of that people."

This is another of the many arguments put forth in favor of the proposition that Daniel was written by a Maccabean Jew: Daniel's use of the term "Chaldean" as referring specifically to astrologers is an anachronism in the sixth century B.C. But this is essentially an argument from silence. Apart from Daniel, the first known instance of such a usage of the word is in the writings of Herodotus circa 450 B.C.¹³⁴ It is not altogether improbable that "Chaldean" could have been used in this way 87 years before.

f. Dan. 2:36-45: "The four successive kingdoms in this apocalyptic perspective are the Babylonian (gold), the Median (silver), the Persian (bronze), and the Hellenistic (iron). The last, after Alexander's death, was divided among his generals (Daniel 2:41-42)..."

The NAB's exegesis of this prophecy is quite novel; historically the four kingdoms have been understood as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.¹³⁵ Moreover, by this exegesis the NAB

commentators strip their Maccabean Daniel of the last vestiges of his prophetic foresight, not even allowing him to predict the events of the next few years!

There are several problems with this reading. First, the Median Empire did not succeed the Babylonian Empire; the Medes lost their sovereignty to the Persians some years before the Euphrates was ever diverted and mighty Babylon fell.¹³⁶ Second, the Book of Daniel, in vv. 8:3,20, treats the Medo-Persian kingdom as a whole, depicting it as a ram with two horns, one larger than the other. One would think that Daniel would be consistent, and treat it as a whole here as well.¹³⁷ Third, Daniel 2:44-45 states that within the lifetimes of the kings of the fourth empire of this prophecy God would establish His messianic kingdom on earth. Christ Himself interpreted this passage as a reference to His person and mission (Luke 20:18). Yet by His time the Greek empire had long since been conquered by Rome. Hence the fourth kingdom is Rome. The NAB's interpretation simply does not line up with the facts.

f. Dan. 7:5: "A bear: represents the Median empire, its three tusks symbolizing its destructive nature..."

The bear could much better be interpreted as Medo-Persia than Media. If it is interpreted as Media one is left floundering as to the meaning of the statement that "[the bear] was raised up on one side." However, if one interprets it as Medo-Persia then it makes perfect sense as a parallel to vv. 8:3,20; it signifies the superiority of the Persians in the kingdom. In addition, the "three tusks... in its mouth" could better be translated as three ribs between its teeth (cf. Amos 3:12; Ps 124:6; Job 29:17; Jer 51:44). Thus it would signify the three main conquests of the Medo-Persian Empire, namely Lydia, Babylon, and Egypt.¹³⁸

f. Dan. 7:6: "A leopard: used to symbolize the swiftness with which Cyrus the Persian established his kingdom. Four heads: corresponding to the four Persian kings of Daniel 11:2."

The leopard could also symbolize the swiftness with which Alexander the Great established his kingdom, in which case its four heads would correspond to the four smaller kingdoms which Alexander's generals carved out for themselves after his death. This is by far the more natural interpretation, as Daniel soon goes into great detail about these events (vv. 8:8-9; 8:20-21; 11). Keil further notices that "the four heads do not rise up one after another [as the four succeeding Persian kings of the NAB's interpretation], but that they all exist contemporaneously on the body of the beast, and therefore can only represent four contemporary kings, or signify that this kingdom is divided into four kingdoms."¹³⁹

f. Dan. 7:7f: "...The ten horns represent the kings of the Seleucid dynasty, the only part of the Hellenistic empire that concerned the author. The little horn is Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163 B.C.), the worst of the Seleucid kings, who usurped the throne."

f. Dan. 7:25: "The reference is to the persecutions of Antiochus IV and his attempt to force the Jews to give up their customs and to adopt Hellenistic ways (1 Macc 1:33-34).

If one accepts this erroneous interpretation, one is forced to conclude that Daniel believed that God would establish His Messianic kingdom immediately after the overthrow of Antiochus Epiphanes (cf. Daniel 7:25-27). Obviously, this did not happen. Furthermore, the Seleucid Empire cannot properly be described as "devouring the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it" (Dan 7:23). Rather, we must interpret this kingdom of ten horns the same way we interpret it in the book of Revelation, as bearing dual fulfillment in the Roman Empire and the kingdom of Antichrist.

f. Dan. 9:24: "...A most holy: an expression used almost always of an object, the altar or the temple, but once (1 Chron 23:13) of Aaron the high priest. The author sees the definitive establishment of the kingdom of God, realized in the reconsecration of the temple after Antiochus' desecration, or personified in the holy community

(like the Son of Man of Daniel 7). The Fathers of the Church almost unanimously understood the reference to be to Christ, the final realization of the prophecy."

f. Dan. 9:25: "*From the utterance... to be rebuilt: from the time of Jeremiah's prophecy. One... anointed and a leader: either Cyrus, who was called the anointed of the Lord to end the exile (Isaiah 45:1), or the high priest Joshua who presided over the rebuilding of the altar of sacrifice after the exile (Ezra 3:2)...*"

f. Dan. 9:26: "*An anointed: doubtless the high priest Onias III, murdered in 171 B.C., from which the author dates the beginning of the persecution...*"

Once again the NAB commentators espouse an interpretation foreign to the patrimony of the Catholic Church. By taking care to specify that the Fathers of the Church *almost* unanimously understood the reference to be to Christ, they studiously avoid the condemnation of the First Vatican Council.¹⁴⁰ Yet, one suspects that, whatever exception or exceptions the NAB might be able to find, the consensus of patristic exegesis of this passage amounts to unanimity in the sense envisioned by the conciliar decree.

This prophecy is about Jesus Christ, not indirectly through its quasi-messianic themes, as the NAB teaches, but directly and exclusively, and I will prove it. First, though at first glance God's decree that at some point in the future Jerusalem would be restored (Jeremiah 30:18) seems a likely candidate for the starting point of the 70 weeks, closer examination rules it out. For this we must consult other translations, as the NAB takes liberties with the text of Daniel 9:25. It translates it, in part, as "from the utterance of the word that Jerusalem *was to be* rebuilt," whereas literal translations all render this section as "from the issuing of a decree *to* restore and rebuild Jerusalem" or some such. This is why this is important: the NAB's rendering makes this prophecy sound like a reference to a general proclamation that Jerusalem would at some point be rebuilt; the literal rendering makes it sound like a reference to a specific command i.e. "go, rebuild and restore Jerusalem." God's decree in Jeremiah 30:18 meshes with the NAB's version, but not with the literal version, as He did not command Jeremiah to build.

To what then, does Daniel 9:25 refer? It refers to Atraxerxes' decree to Nehemiah to rebuild the Holy City (Nehemiah 2:3-8), which took place on Nisan 1, 444 B.C.¹⁴¹ This is when the 70 weeks (i.e. 490 years) begin. And if we convert the prophetic years of 360 days into precise solar years of 365.242 days, adding the 69 weeks which Gabriel tells us will pass between the decree of Atraxerxes and the coming of Messiah (anointed one) the Prince places us exactly on the date of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem.¹⁴² So, the anointed one of v. 25 is none other than Christ Himself. Moreover, with this hermeneutic, unlike that of the NAB, we have no need to posit that the anointed ones referred to in vv 24, 25, and 26 are three different people or things; they all refer to Christ. He was cut off and killed, and then a few years later the Romans came and destroyed the city and the sanctuary.

f. Dan. 11:5-45: "*These verses describe the dynastic histories of the Ptolemies in Egypt... and the Seleucids in Syria... In Daniel 11:10-20 is described the struggle between the two kingdoms for the control of Palestine... Finally, Daniel 11:21-45 describe the career of Antiochus IV and his persecution, in details that have been seen above.*"

Indeed, this prophecy is incredibly precise. Yet if it were written after the events it describes had already transpired it would be nothing more than a pious fraud.

VIII. Matthew

Sadly, the New Testament does not fare much better than the Old under the historical critical knife of the New American Bible; just as the translators enthusiastically embrace Julius Wellhausen's four source theory for the composition of the Pentateuch, so too do they embrace a German multi-source theory for

the composition of the Gospel of Matthew. This time the sources are only three (Mk, Q, and M), but nevertheless the force of the two theories is the same: Scripture was not written by eyewitnesses and is not entirely trustworthy as history.

In accord with its German theory, the NAB rejects the unanimous patristic tradition which ascribes this Gospel to St. Matthew the Apostle. Contrariwise, this tradition is convincing for the Catholic Church.¹⁴³ Indeed, it is sufficiently well attested that it should be convincing on the grounds of rational historical criticism alone.

Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, writing near the beginning of the second century,¹⁴⁴ affirmed that Matthew put the stories of the words and deeds of the Lord Jesus into an ordered arrangement in the Hebrew language.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, Papias based this affirmation on testimony from the previous Christian generation. Later in the second century, St. Irenaeus of Lyons confirmed, "Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church."¹⁴⁶ Origen likewise, at the beginning of the third century, witnessed to the same tradition.¹⁴⁷

Yet the NAB, without any external evidence, hypothesizes that the Gospel of Matthew was composed by an anonymous Syrian Christian around 80 A.D. This author used for his sources the Gospel of Mark, a hypothesized collection of the sayings of Christ known as Q which was also used by the author of Luke, and certain oral and written traditions known only to him.¹⁴⁸ He also fabricated certain things.¹⁴⁹ In sum, the NAB posits that our Gospel of Matthew is but partially and remotely apostolic in origin, as it is the product of the synthesis of numerous oral and written traditions with a few flights of fancy thrown into the mix.

The NAB commentators cite as support for this theory the fact that the Gospel of Matthew contains a great deal of the same material as the Gospel of Mark. They assume that the author of Matthew took this material from Mark (indeed they do not interact at all with other possible explanations for the coincidence of so much material in these two Gospels, such as their mutual transmission of stereotyped apostolic anecdotes). And as an apostle, writing from memory, would not have had to rely for his material on Mark, who was not an eyewitness to Christ's earthly ministry, the NAB concludes that the author of Matthew was not an apostle. This argument, obviously, requires Matthew to have been written after Mark; this the NAB fails to prove.

Incidentally, not that it resolves the question of Gospel priority, but we may here consider a Jewish parody of Christianity which ironically supports an early date of composition for the Gospel of Matthew. Obviously the Gospel must be older than the parody which mocks it. So, since this story, attributed to Gamaliel II, appears to be from the 70s or 80s A.D., the Gospel according to Matthew must be even older. The story reads:

On the morrow came R. Gamaliel and brought [a Christian judge] a Libyan ass, and told him that he did not wish to let his sister inherit. Said the judge: "After thy sister left I consulted the law again, and found that the new law said: 'I did not come to abolish the Mosaic law, neither to increase nor to diminish it.' [cf. Matt 5:17] Hence it must remain as in the old law, that where a son is left a sister must not inherit." Said Ema Shalom to the judge: "May God make thy light as bright as a candle." [cf. Matt 5:15-16] Said R. Gamaliel to her (in the presence of the judge): "An ass came along and extinguished thy candle."¹⁵⁰

Gamaliel II lived into the early second century, so he could have written the story at a later date. However, since the story mentions the division of his father's estate, this implies that it takes place before or soon after his father's death, which would presumably precede his own by a few decades.

Hence, even if Gamaliel wrote the story near the end of his life, he saw nothing odd about having his characters quoting the Gospel of Matthew much earlier.

Regarding the postulate of the Q source: it is just that, a postulate. There is no hard evidence of it ever having existed. Its only justification is that Matthew and Luke contain a number of sayings of Jesus which Mark and John do not. But this fact admits of other explanations besides shared dependence on a particular documentary source.

Lastly, the NAB commentators cite Matt 22:7 as evidence for the post-A.D. 70 date of composition, in which Jesus alludes to the impending destruction of Jerusalem. This is an incoherent argument. If one grants that Jesus foresaw the future, He could easily have uttered this parable in the early 30s A.D. And the NAB commentators do not seem to preclude Jesus' foreseeing the future, as they grant at least the *possibility* that the Gospel of Mark, in which also Jesus predicts the destruction of Jerusalem, was written before 70 A.D. So, could Jesus predict the destruction of Jerusalem or could He not? If He could, how is Matt 22:7 evidence that Matthew was written after 70 A.D.?¹⁵¹

As we continue through the commentary proper, note how many times the NAB will run afoul of St. Pius X's condemnations in *Lamentabili Sane*, quoted above.¹⁵²

f. Matt. 2:1-12: "The future rejection of Jesus by Israel and his acceptance by the Gentiles are retrojected into this scene of the narrative."

This is what happens when one abandons the traditional Catholic teaching that the Gospels were written by the men whose names they bear. Suddenly one need no longer believe that the events they record actually occurred, but may reduce them to pseudo-historical theological allegory: some Christian made up the story to illustrate a point. And apparently, by the way, that Christian was so historically illiterate he did not realize that Herod was not a Jew and hence was ill suited for rhetorical use as the prototypical Jewish rejecter of Christ.

f. Matt. 4:12-17: "...In order to accommodate Jesus' move to Capernaum to the prophecy [of the light rising upon Zebulun and Naphtali (Isaiah 8:22-9:1)], Matthew speaks of that town as being 'in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali' (Matthew 4:13), whereas it was only in the territory of the latter, and he understands the sea of the prophecy, the Mediterranean, as the sea of Galilee."

Like Renan, the NAB commentators presume to correct Sacred Scripture's self-understanding. They do so rashly. First, the borders between Zebulun and Naphtali had long since been erased by the time of St. Matthew, so he made no error by combining them as one territory in which Capernaum was situated. Second, it is not certain that Matthew identified the sea of Isaiah's prophecy as Galilee. That he described Capernaum with the adjective *parathalassian* (seaside), referring to its proximity to Galilee, is not conclusive proof that when he proceeded to quote Isaiah's prophecy mentioning "the sea" he thereby understood Galilee. Third, it is not certain that the sea of Isaiah's prophecy is in fact the Mediterranean rather than Galilee; therefore if Matthew identified it as Galilee he could very well have been right (as indeed, he must be, for he is inspired). Isaiah's *derek-hayyam* may mean either "the way to the sea" or "the way by the sea." The road to which he referred ran by Galilee and to the Mediterranean. Hence the sea to which he referred may have been Galilee or the Mediterranean.

f. Matt. 4:20: "Here and in Matthew 4:22, as in Mark (Mark 1:16-20) and unlike the Lucan account (Luke 5:1-11), the disciples' response is motivated only by Jesus' invitation, an element that emphasizes his mysterious power."

There is absolutely no need to charge Scripture with a contradiction solely because one Gospel omits an element of a narrative which another Gospel contains. In fact, the story in the Gospel of Luke about

Jesus going out into the water with Simon fits nicely between vv. 18 and 19 of Matthew. One need only do a little work to find amongst the Gospels a satisfactory harmony. These scholars would do well to listen to St. Augustine's advice to Faustus.¹⁵³

f. Matt. 5:1-7:29: "The first of the five discourses that are a central part of the structure of this gospel. It is the discourse section of the first book and contains sayings of Jesus derived from Q and from M. The Lucan parallel is in that gospel's "Sermon on the Plain" (Luke 6:20-49), although some of the sayings in Matthew's "Sermon on the Mount" have their parallels in other parts of Luke..."

f. Matt. 5:1-2: "Unlike Luke's sermon, this is addressed not only to the disciples but to the crowds (see Matthew 7:28)."

Since I dealt with the three-source theory above, I will here confine myself solely to answering these footnotes' two charges of contradiction, namely that in Matthew this sermon takes place on a mountain whereas in Luke it is delivered on a plain, and that in Matthew Jesus addresses the crowds whereas in Luke He speaks solely to His disciples.

As to the former, the Greek words *topou pedinou*, which the NAB translators here interpret as "plain," do not have the same semantic range as that English word; rather they simply signify a stretch of level ground. The NAB translators know this, as demonstrated by their translation of Luke 6:17. So we see that the alleged contradiction vanishes as soon as one bothers to carefully examine the text. There is nothing contradictory about the statements, "He gave a speech on a mountain" and "He gave a speech on a stretch of level ground." One can find stretches of more or less level ground on mountainsides. And certainly if I were hiking down a mountain, and wanted to stop somewhere to give a sermon, this is the sort of spot which I would choose.

As to the latter, a quick look at the two verses preceding Luke 6:20 obliterates the claim that Jesus is there depicted as speaking only to His disciples, and not to the crowds. We learn that "there was a great throng of people... who had come to hear Him... and all the people were trying to touch Him." Indeed, verse 20 does say that Jesus looked at His disciples when He began His sermon, but the preceding verses make it absolutely obvious that there were many, many other people in attendance. An apologist might look at his wife as he begins his opening statement; that does not mean that she is the only person watching the debate.

f. Matt. 5:3-12: "...Although modified by Matthew, the first, second, fourth, and ninth beatitudes have Lucan parallels (Matt 5:3; Lk 6:20; Matt 5:4; Lk 6:21, 22; Matt 5:6; Lk 6:21a; Matt 5:11-12; Lk 5:22-23). The others were added by the evangelist and are probably his own composition..."

This footnote is representative of the many, many gratuitous assertions in the NAB that the evangelists put words into Our Lord's mouth.

f. Matt. 8:14-15: "Cf Mark 1:29-31. Unlike Mark, Matthew has no implied request by others for the woman's cure. Jesus acts on his own initiative, and the cured woman rises and waits not on 'them' (Mark 1:31) but on him."

An omission is not tantamount to a contradiction. It is completely nonsensical to charge the Gospels with error simply because one evangelist includes details which another evangelist omits. The NAB is, once again, making the same logical error as Faustus.

f. Matt. 10:22: "*To the end*: the original meaning was probably 'until the parousia.' But it is not likely that Matthew expected no missionary disciples to suffer death before then, since he envisages the martyrdom of other Christians (Matthew 10:21). For him, the end is probably that of the individual's life (see Matthew 10:28)."

This claim has dire implications for Christ's divinity. If, as the NAB claims, the original meaning of Christ's words to His disciples was *probably* 'until the parousia,' this would mean that Christ *probably* mistakenly believed that the end of the world would come within the lifetime of His disciples. As He is God, this is quite impossible. Perhaps the NAB would defend our Lord's divinity by assuring us that He did not actually say these words.

f. Matt. 13:1-53: "The discourse in parables is the third great discourse of Jesus in Matthew and constitutes the second part of the third book of the gospel. Matthew follows the Marcan outline (Mark 4:1-35) but has only two of Mark's parables, the five others being from Q and M..."

Notice that practically every other footnote mentions Q. Q simply receives an inordinate amount of attention for a hypothesized document. This footnote is indicative of the kind of circus which results when one abandons belief in apostolic authorship of the Gospels and decides to dismember them with highly speculative (and no less destructive) textual criticism.

f. Matt. 14:1-12: "The murder of the Baptist by Herod Antipas prefigures the death of Jesus (see Matt 17:12). The Marcan source (Matt 6:14-29) is much reduced and in some points changed. In Mark Herod reveres John as a holy man and the desire to kill him is attributed to Herodias (Matt 6:19, 20), whereas here that desire is Herod's from the beginning (Matt 6:5)."

Here we find yet another allegation of contradiction. These scholars have completely forgotten the kind of humility exemplified by St. Justin Martyr,¹⁵⁴ and charge the Bible with egregious errors *ad nauseum*. Suffice to say, there is no contradiction here, just as there have not been contradictions in any of the other verses whereupon the NAB has accused the Bible of error. In neither account does Herod revere St. John the Baptist. Rather, the motivation behind Herod's unwillingness to execute him is fear (Matt 14:5, Mark 6:20). Herod is worried about saving his own skin. In both accounts Herod is distressed at the prospect of having to kill St. John but grudgingly does so because he is bound by his oath and his public credibility is at stake (Matt 14:9, Mark 6:26).

f. Matt. 16:14: "...*Jeremiah*: an addition of Matthew to the Marcan source."

This is what is so pernicious about the three source theory for the composition of Matthew. No longer is this Gospel an independent witness to the life and deeds of Jesus Christ. No longer is it the testimony of a holy apostle. No, it is only an edited version of Mark. It is, in the eyes of these scholars, essentially a work of plagiarism.

f. Matt. 16:21-23: "...Neither this nor the two later passion predictions (Matthew 17:22-23; 20:17-19) can be taken as sayings that, as they stand, go back to Jesus himself..."

Exactly why could Christ not have made these predictions of His Passion? On what principle do the NAB commentators exclude this possibility? Do they in fact deny that Jesus could or did predict the future? They naturally will never say such a thing outright, but they certainly provide one with grounds for suspicion.

f. Matt. 17:24: "*The temple tax*: before the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in A.D. 70 every male Jew above nineteen years of age was obliged to make an annual contribution to its upkeep (cf Exodus 30:11-16; Nehemiah

10:33). After the destruction the Romans imposed upon Jews the obligation of paying that tax for the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. There is disagreement about which period the story deals with."

Jesus died on the Cross long before 70 A.D., so of course this narrative, set by the inspired and unerring apostle during the life of Christ, is dealing with the second temple period. Such logic should suffice for one holding the integral Catholic faith.

The following verses of the pericope confirm this conclusion. Jesus explains that He is not obligated to pay the temple tax because kings do not collect taxes from their sons, but from strangers (the NAB obscures the meaning by replacing "sons" with "subjects"). Clearly, Jesus (and by extension, Christians) is the son and God the Father is the king. Hence the temple tax of two drachmas is being collected on behalf of God. Now, I find it hard to believe that God would collect taxes in order to maintain an abominable pagan shrine. That would be Caesar's doing, and as Christians are not privileged sons of Caesar, they would not be exempt from his tax, and Jesus' argument would be moot.

f. Matt. 20:20-21: "The reason for Matthew's making the mother the petitioner (cf Mark 10:35) is not clear..."

Naturally, Matthew did so because the mother actually asked Jesus this and St. Matthew the Apostle faithfully recorded what he remembered happening. As for harmonizing Matthew with Mark, perhaps James and John asked their question through the intercession of their mother.

f. Matt. 21:4-5: "*The prophet*: this fulfillment citation is actually composed of two distinct Old Testament texts, Isaiah 62:11 (Say to daughter Zion) and Zechariah 9:9. The ass and the colt are the same animal in the prophecy, mentioned twice in different ways, the common Hebrew literary device of poetic parallelism. That Matthew takes them as two is one of the reasons why some scholars think that he was a Gentile rather than a Jewish Christian who would presumably not make that mistake (see Introduction)."

f. Matt. 21:7: "*Upon them*: upon the two animals; an awkward picture resulting from Matthew's misunderstanding of the prophecy."

These statements are, as Pius XII would say, "absolutely wrong and forbidden." Once more, the NAB scholars presume to correct Scripture's self-understanding, and do so rashly. One may easily interpret the "them" of v. 7 as referring to the cloaks and not to the donkey and the colt. Jesus sat only on the colt. The statement in v. 5 that Zion's king comes meek and riding on a donkey and a colt would then be interpreted loosely as referring to how the donkey carried some of His baggage.

f. Matt. 23:8-12: "The prohibition of these titles [Rabbi, Father, Master] to the disciples suggests that their use was present in Matthew's church. The Matthean Jesus forbids not only the titles but the spirit of superiority and pride that is shown by their acceptance."

The official Bible of the USCCB here gives away the store to "fundamentalist" Protestantism and admits that in Matt 23:9 Jesus literally forbids the use of the titles father, master, and teacher. A great deal of apologetic ink has been spilt refuting this contention. Why is our own Bible espousing it? The NAB's commentary seems to be by turns Jewish, atheist, and Protestant; it is anything but Catholic. Finally, the phrase "the Matthean Jesus" is repulsive. Is there more than one Jesus in the Bible? Does the "Matthean Jesus" teach doctrines contradictory to the Marcan, the Lucan, the Johannine?

f. Matt. 24:34: "The difficulty raised by this verse [this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place] cannot be satisfactorily removed by the supposition that this generation means the Jewish people throughout the course of their history, much less the entire human race. Perhaps for Matthew it means the generation to which he and his community belonged."

Once again the NAB entertains a supposition which the enemies of Christianity use against the credibility of the Bible, and which the Magisterium has explicitly condemned:¹⁵⁵ perhaps the authors of the Bible mistakenly taught in their writings that the world would end within their lifetimes.

There are several possible solutions to the difficulty raised by this verse. One is that Matthew 24 refers primarily to God's judgment of Israel in 70 A.D., and hence actually was fulfilled within the lifetime of the generation which witnessed the life of Christ and wrote the New Testament. This view, known as preterism, requires a metaphorical interpretation of Matt 24:30, but can justify this by appeal to Matt 26:64. Another possible solution, as the NAB notes, is that "this generation" refers to the Jewish people. The NAB does not justify its judgment that this solution is unsatisfactory. Again, perhaps "this generation" refers to the generation of the faithful, the Church. Or, still another possibility, we may understand the aorist *gentai* as an inceptive, i.e., "this generation will not pass away until all these things *begin* to take place."

f. Matt. 27:5-8: "For another tradition about the death of Judas, cf Acts 1:18-19. The two traditions agree only in the purchase of a field with the money paid to Judas for his betrayal of Jesus and the name given to the field, the Field of Blood. In Acts Judas himself buys the field and its name comes from his own blood shed in his fatal accident on it [i.e. falling off a cliff, as opposed to Matthew where Judas hangs himself and the chief priests then use his money to buy a field]."

The traditional explanation for this alleged contradiction is that Judas hanged himself on a tree near a cliff. The branch subsequently broke, and Judas fell down the cliff and "burst open in the middle."¹⁵⁶ Regarding the statement of Acts 1:18 that Judas "bought a parcel of land with the wages of his iniquity": although Judas did not intend to purchase a field for himself, his returning the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests resulted in his obtaining a field, and hence analogically he could be said to have purchased it.

f. Matt. 28:8: "Contrast Mark 16:8 where the women in their fear 'said nothing to anyone.'"

It is on this sad note that I will end my study of the Gospel according to Matthew according to the New American Bible. This footnote serves no purpose but to cast doubt on the reliability of the Gospels, and there are more than enough atheists in the world to do that. A Bible created by Christians should reconcile *prima facie* contradictions, not point them out. So, I will here supply for the NAB's dereliction of duty, and propose that when Mark said that the women "said nothing to anyone," he meant that as the women went to tell the disciples about the Resurrection they said nothing to anyone they met on the way.

IX. Luke

In the introduction to the Gospel according to Luke, the NAB makes nearly identical claims to those it makes in the introduction to Matthew. Luke's Gospel, like Matthew, is said to derive from three sources: in this case Mark, a "written collection of sayings of Jesus also known to the author of the Gospel of Matthew (Q: see Introduction to Matthew), and other special traditions that were used by Luke alone among the gospel writers."¹⁵⁷ Thus, instead of Mk, Q, and M, we have Mk, Q, and L.

As the NAB scholars will make clear in their commentary, they believe that Luke was quite free in his compilation, arrangement, and adaptation of his source material, that he was, shall we say, creative in shaping his narrative to serve his rhetorical purposes. We see this reflected in the introduction, which asserts, Luke "is concerned with presenting Christianity as a legitimate form of worship in the Roman world, a religion that is capable of meeting the spiritual needs of a world empire like that of Rome. To this end, Luke depicts the Roman governor Pilate declaring Jesus innocent of any wrongdoing three

times."¹⁵⁸ Let us be clear: when the NAB says that Luke "depicts" Pilate declaring Jesus innocent three times, it is by no means affirming that Pilate actually declared Jesus innocent three times. Luke says that he did, but the NAB doubts or denies the correspondence of Luke's statement to historical reality.

Next, the NAB argues that certain "details in Luke's Gospel (13:35a; 19:43-44; 21:20; 23:28-31) imply that the author was acquainted with the destruction of the city of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70."¹⁵⁹ Hence it concludes that the Gospel was probably written after that date. However, all four passages which the NAB quotes as implying familiarity with the destruction of Jerusalem are predictions, on the lips of Christ, of what would happen *in the future*. Could Jesus not have predicted the destruction of Jerusalem? The NAB's argument for the late date of composition of Luke has no force unless one assumes this heretical hidden premise.

In the same vein, the NAB asserts that the "prologue of the gospel makes it clear that Luke is not part of the first generation of Christian disciples."¹⁶⁰ The first footnote in the commentary speculates that he is a "second-or third-generation Christian." However, although Luke's prologue proves that Luke was not an eyewitness of the life of Jesus, it is perfectly consistent with his being among the first Christian converts after Pentecost, and hence a contemporary and companion of the Apostles. This is what ancient Christian tradition affirms, as witnessed by Papyrus Bodmer XIV (c. 200 AD), the Muratorian Canon, Irenaeus of Lyons,¹⁶¹ the Anti-Marcionite Prologue, and Tertullian.¹⁶² This tradition has been confirmed by the Pontifical Biblical Commission,¹⁶³ and indeed is so strong that even Joseph Fitzmyer accepts its basic contours, viz., that this Gospel's author is "Luke, a Syrian of Antioch, a physician, and a sometime collaborator of Paul."¹⁶⁴

Finally, the NAB proclaims Luke's ignorance ("incomplete knowledge") regarding "Palestinian geography, customs, and practices," this ignorance being among the "characteristics of this Gospel." The NAB will attempt to substantiate this charge by making specific allegations of error in its commentary, which I will answer in turn. Later, in the chapter on the Acts of the Apostles, I will supply additional arguments for the early (pre 70 A.D.) date of composition of both Lucan works.

f. Lk. 1:1-4: "...As a second-or third-generation Christian, Luke acknowledges his debt to earlier eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, but claims that his contribution to this developing tradition is a complete and accurate account..."

Note that St. Luke merely *claims* to give a complete and accurate account of the events of the life of Christ. The NAB leaves the question open for now as to whether this claim is true. In subsequent footnotes the NAB will inform us that St. Luke made things up or changed his source material to suit his theological ends. It would seem to follow from this that St. Luke's claim is false.

f. Lk. 1:5-2:52: "...The narrative uses early Christian traditions about the birth of Jesus, traditions about the birth and circumcision of John the Baptist, and canticles such as the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) and Benedictus (Luke 1:67-79), composed of phrases drawn from the Greek Old Testament. It is largely, however, the composition of Luke who writes in imitation of Old Testament birth stories, combining historical and legendary details, literary ornamentation and interpretation of scripture..."

Here as in many other places the NAB scholars portray St. Luke as manipulating the past in order to weave an edifying story.¹⁶⁵ They do not entertain the traditional belief that he simply passes on eyewitness testimony (in this case, from Mary), as he claimed he would do in his prologue.

f. Lk. 1:5: "...Luke relates the story of salvation history to events in contemporary world history. Here and in Luke 3:1-2 he connects his narrative with events in Palestinian history; in Luke 2:1-2 and Luke 3:1 he casts the Jesus story in the light of events of Roman history..."

Here again, the NAB intimates that St. Luke's gospel is something akin to historical fiction. St. Luke is said to combine the truth with fancy, and place the result in the context of real, historical events.

f. Lk. 1:20: "*You will be speechless and unable to talk: Zechariah's becoming mute is the sign given in response to his question in v 18. When Mary asks a similar question in Luke 1:34, unlike Zechariah who was punished for his doubt, she, in spite of her doubt, is praised and reassured (Luke 1:35-37).*"

f. Lk. 1:45: "*Blessed are you who believed: Luke portrays Mary as a believer whose faith stands in contrast to the disbelief of Zechariah (Luke 1:20).*"

Doubt is a sin against faith.¹⁶⁶ If Mary doubted God's messenger at the Annunciation, as Calvin impiously thought,¹⁶⁷ then she sinned, and she is not the Immaculate Conception. If it was not the NAB's intent to accuse our Lady of sin, it should not have attributed "doubt" to her, and should have used the word "difficulty" or some equivalent instead. So, the NAB is at the very least guilty of phrasing itself in a scandalously inaccurate manner.

Whether the NAB scholars intend to accuse our Lady of actually committing a sin of doubt, or at least of being depicted as committing a sin of doubt in Luke's narrative, is difficult to discern. On the one hand, they mention Mary's "doubt" in direct parallel to Zechariah's doubt, which is clearly sinful. This leads one to believe that they mean "doubt" in the same sense in both instances. On the other hand, in the subsequent footnote the NAB insists that Mary, within Luke's narrative, is a believer whose faith stands in contrast to Zechariah's disbelief. Would the NAB scholars simply state their position plainly?

f. Lk. 1:46-55: "*Because there is no specific connection of the canticle to the context of Mary's pregnancy and her visit to Elizabeth, the Magnificat (with the possible exception of v 48) may have been a Jewish Christian hymn that Luke found appropriate at this point in his story...*"

f. Lk. 1:68-79: "*Like the canticle of Mary (Luke 1:46-55) the canticle of Zechariah is only loosely connected with its context... [T]he hymn... applies more closely to Jesus and his work than to John. Again like Mary's canticle, it... may have been a Jewish Christian hymn of praise that Luke adapted to fit the present context...*"

The NAB seems intent on dissenting from every magisterial decree ever promulgated by the Pontifical Biblical Commission. Above, it claimed that Luke was probably written after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Here it intimates that Mary herself did not compose the Magnificat. These propositions contradict replies VI and IV, respectively, of the PBC's 1912 decree Concerning the Authors, Dates, and Historical Truth of the Gospels according to Mark and Luke.¹⁶⁸

The NAB does not see the specific connection of the Magnificat to the context of Mary's visit to Elizabeth, but it is there. In v. 48 Mary proclaims "from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." This indicates that she has received an extraordinary blessing; it is not something that every Jewish Christian would sing about himself at a typical Sunday meeting. Mary's statement in v. 49 that God has done great things or wonders for her reinforces this. The NAB argues that Luke may have added v. 48 in order to connect the hymn to Mary, but this is pure speculation. Moreover, to argue that the hymn has no specific connection to Mary, based on the supposition that the verse which connects it specifically to Mary was not originally part of the hymn, is manifestly circular.

Much of Mary's canticle, it is true, reflects general biblical themes which, though appropriate, are not specific to the context of Luke 1. However, it is to be expected that Mary, bursting into a spontaneous song of praise to God, would echo biblical themes whose application is broader than her immediate circumstances.

The canticle of Zechariah, the Benedictus, receives similar treatment to that afforded the Magnificat: the NAB denies or doubts that Zechariah proclaimed it in the circumstances narrated by St. Luke. In justification of this position, the NAB notes that the Benedictus speaks more to Christ than to John. Well, naturally! Christ must increase, and John must decrease. It is entirely appropriate for Zechariah's hymn to laud primarily the work of Christ, and secondarily John's work to prepare His way. Indeed, it is only in the context of Christ's work that John's work of preparation is intelligible. Hence, the NAB's argument by which it justifies its refusal to affirm that Zechariah composed the Benedictus, like that with respect to Mary and the Magnificat, falls flat.

f. Lk. 2:1-2: "Although universal registrations of Roman citizens are attested in 28 B.C., 8 B.C., and A.D. 14 and enrollments in individual provinces of those who are not Roman citizens are also attested, such a universal census of the Roman world under Caesar Augustus is unknown outside the New Testament. Moreover, there are notorious historical problems connected with Luke's dating the census when Quirinius was governor of Syria, and the various attempts to resolve the difficulties have proved unsuccessful. P. Sulpicius Quirinius became legate of the province of Syria in A.D. 6-7 when Judea was annexed to the province of Syria. At that time, a provincial census of Judea was taken up. If Quirinius had been legate of Syria previously, it would have to have been before 10 B.C. because the various legates of Syria from 10 B.C. to 4 B.C. (the death of Herod) are known, and such a dating for an earlier census under Quirinius would create additional problems for dating the beginning of Jesus' ministry (Luke 3:1, 23). A previous legateship after 4 B.C. (and before A.D. 6) would not fit with the dating of Jesus' birth in the days of Herod (Luke 1:5; Matthew 2:1). Luke may simply be combining Jesus' birth in Bethlehem with his vague recollection of a census under Quirinius..."

This footnote accuses Luke of being a significantly less than conscientious historian, recklessly constructing a narrative based on nothing more than a vague recollection and, therefore, inevitably making glaring historical mistakes.

The Vatican's chief historian, Fr. Walter Brandmüller, admirably defends the accuracy of Luke's work:

[Gerhard] Kroll shows by means of the available sources from profane history, such as inscriptions, papyrus finds, ancient historiography, and so forth, that Augustus in fact decreed a universal census of the Roman Empire. Kroll refers, for example, to the so-called *Monumentum Ancyranum*. This, an extensive inscription in the temple of Rome and Augustus in Ankara, contains a text that Augustus himself left behind toward the end of his life... In it Augustus says that he ordered a census three times during his reign. The Roman jurist Tertullian (d. 220), who claims to have used the archives of the Roman state, writes in his polemical work, *Adversus Marcionem*, which was composed in Rome: "It is certain that during the reign of Augustus the census was carried out in Judea by Sentius Saturnius."

This news is startling. Wasn't Quirinius the one who carried out the census? Now, Luke is indeed the only one to report that Quirinius was governor during Herod's lifetime (d. 4 B.C.); nevertheless, none of this rules out the accuracy of the Lucan account. It can also be harmonized with Tertullian's information, for a series of references leads to the highly probable conclusion that Quirinius, during the years in question, held the superior position of an *Oriente praepositus* [commander over the East], to whom the governor of Syria was a subordinate. Consequently, Luke mentioned Quirinius as the one actually responsible for the census and omitted the name of the governor who carried it out.

...No one disputes the fact that the census was carried out in the provinces every fourteen years. So if we count fourteen years back from A.D. 6, we come to the year 8 B.C. At that time Herod was living, and Quirinius resided in the East as Caesar's legate. Therefore, during the years from 8 to 4 B.C.--since the census process took several years to complete--the census took place and Jesus was born.¹⁶⁹

f. Lk. 2:11: "...As savior, Jesus is looked upon by Luke as the one who rescues humanity from sin and delivers humanity from the condition of alienation from God..."

The NAB here continues its long tradition of using subjective language to the exclusion of proclaiming objective truth. Thus, "Jesus is *looked upon* by Luke as the one who rescues humanity from sin."

f. Lk. 2:22: "*Their purification*: syntactically, *their* must refer to Mary and Joseph, even though the Mosaic law never mentions the purification of the husband... *They took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord*: as the firstborn son (Lk 2:7) Jesus was consecrated to the Lord as the law required (Ex 13:2,12), but there was no requirement that this be done at the temple. The concept of a presentation in the temple is probably derived from 1 Sm 1:24-28.

Contra the NAB, syntax does not compel us to read "their" as referring to Mary and Joseph, and context suggests Mary and Jesus instead. On this point Francois Bovon writes:

The expression ["their purification"] is only to connect "purification" and "presentation." Luke brings these into the context of the redemption of the firstborn, as the citation from Exodus 13 indicates, surely because "purification" comes up in this context now and again, although not in Exodus 13. Although an inexact description both for the mother's purification (Lev 12) and for the son's redemption (Exod 13), *katharismos* can be understood as such in a general sense.¹⁷⁰

The NAB is correct to note that the law never required that the firstborn son should be consecrated at the temple in Jerusalem. However, this fact does not justify the NAB's conclusion that the story of Jesus' presentation in the temple was probably fabricated in imitation of a story in the Old Testament, rather than having actually occurred. The Holy Family could have consecrated Jesus at the Jerusalem temple even though this was not a requirement of the law. It ought not surprise us that the Holy Family would perform a supererogatory act of piety!

f. Lk. 2:35: "...[Mary's] blessedness as mother of the Lord will be challenged by her son who describes true blessedness as 'hearing the word of God and observing it.'"

While this footnote perhaps admits of an orthodox interpretation, its manner of expression certainly offends against Catholic sensibilities.

f. Lk. 3:21: "*Was praying*: Luke regularly presents Jesus at prayer at important points in his ministry..."

By now we have observed this phenomenon a sufficient number of times that to point it out again would simply be repetitive. The NAB commentary gives rise to doubt by repeatedly using such language as "Luke portrays," "Luke presents," and "Luke characterizes," without ever explicitly affirming the factual veracity of his work.¹⁷¹ Then it confirms this doubt by accusing Luke of fabricating various details, mixing and matching sources at whim, and in general confirming the sneaking suspicion, engendered by the type of language described above, that St. Luke's portraits/presentations/characterizations are not in fact accurate but the product of a man who has a theological agenda and is not adverse to manhandling historical sources in its pursuit.¹⁷²

f. Lk. 4:1: "*Filled with the holy Spirit*: as a result of the descent of the Spirit upon him at his baptism (Luke 3:21-22), Jesus is now equipped to overcome the devil..."

This footnote is simply bizarre. Jesus, being perfect God and perfect man, was more than sufficiently equipped to overcome the devil from the moment of His conception. Is the NAB here saying that some additional equipment from the Holy Spirit was necessary, such that Jesus would have been inadequate to

overcome the devil without it? This is unthinkable. Traditional Catholic exegesis holds that Jesus allowed Himself to be baptized in order to sanction the ministry of His predecessor, to teach humility, and to sanctify the waters to prepare them to serve as the matter of the sacrament of regeneration.¹⁷³ Christ absolutely did not get baptized because He needed it to arm Himself against a fallen angel.

f. Lk. 4:21: "*Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing: this sermon inaugurates the time of fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Luke presents the ministry of Jesus as fulfilling Old Testament hopes and expectations (Luke 7:22); for Luke, even Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection are done in fulfillment of the scriptures...*"

Even Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection? Of course and especially Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection are done in fulfillment of the Scriptures! And not just *for Luke* (note the subjective language again; the NAB scholars do not agree with Luke that the Old Testament actually prophesied a suffering Messiah, as they will state openly below), but for the other evangelists as well (cf. Matt 26:54; John 19:28), and indeed the whole world, as this is objective truth.

f. Lk. 5:1-11: "There are traces in Luke's story that the post-resurrectional context is the original one: in v 8 Simon addresses Jesus as *Lord* (a post-resurrectional title for Jesus--see Luke 24:34; Acts 2:36--that has been read back into the historical ministry of Jesus) and recognizes himself as a sinner (an appropriate recognition for one who has denied knowing Jesus--Luke 22:54-62)."

"Lord" is not an exclusively post-resurrectional title; Jesus used it of Himself and others used it of Him throughout His earthly ministry.¹⁷⁴ If the NAB scholars intend to relegate to anachronism every instance in which the Gospels record someone addressing Jesus as Lord prior to His resurrection, based on the supposition that "Lord" is a post-resurrectional title, surely they must see the hopeless circularity of their argument. Next, Simon's recognition of himself as a sinner is wholly appropriate for one who has led the life of an average Galilean fisherman. These two facts having been established, we see that this story in perfectly congruous with the context in which Luke situates it, and there is no justification whatsoever for supposing, as the NAB does, that this story has been transposed from its original context as an appearance of the risen Lord.

f. Lk. 5:19: "*Through the tiles: Luke has adapted the story found in Mk to his non-Palestinian audience by changing "opened up the roof" (Mk 2:4, a reference to Palestinian straw and clay roofs) to through the tiles, a detail that reflects the Hellenistic Greco-Roman house with tiled roof.*"

According to the NAB, Luke as a matter of course exercised little care for the accuracy of the factual details of his narrative, and indeed in this instance proposes a factual detail which is objectively false: *if* this story ever actually happened, the paralytic would have been let down through a straw and clay roof, whereas Luke says he was let down through a tile roof.

As in every instance in which it does so, the NAB accuses Sacred Scripture of error rashly. Archbishop Goodier explains of first century Palestinian roofs that "in the centre itself a square patch was covered with loose tiles, resting on thin poles, which in the very hot season could be removed, and so give air and coolness to the room below."¹⁷⁵ This being the case, St. Luke's statement that the paralytic was let down "through the tiles" comports perfectly with the milieu of first century Palestine.

f. Lk. 8:21: "...[B]y omitting Mark 3:33 and especially Mark 3:20-21 Luke has softened the Marcan picture of Jesus' natural family. Probably he did this because Mary has already been presented in Luke 1:38 as the obedient handmaid of the Lord who fulfills the requirement for belonging to the eschatological family of Jesus; cf also Luke 11:27-28."

Once again the NAB raises doubts about the biblical basis of the Immaculate Conception. It teaches here that Luke "probably" softened Mark's portrait of Mary in order to harmonize it with his own portrait of her as an obedient handmaid of the Lord. This suggests that Mark's portrait is inconsistent with Mary's being an obedient handmaid of the Lord (i.e., that in Mark's portrait she is a sinner), or at least that Luke found it to be so. Perhaps the NAB scholars would save their orthodoxy by clarifying that they do not think Mark's portrait of Mary is actually inconsistent with Marian dogma; Luke merely mistakenly thought so.

f. Lk. 9:32: "*They saw his glory: the glory that is proper to God is here attributed to Jesus (see Luke 24:26).*"

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, I must devote a paragraph to one more instance of needlessly subjective language. St. Luke is said to have attributed to Jesus, in the transfiguration narrative, the glory that is proper to God. Shall I trust this attribution? Shall I trust the word of a man who makes things up, who puts words in peoples' mouths, and who writes narratives embellished to sound like Old Testament Scripture, to the detriment of factual accuracy, all because he has an agenda to pursue? The whole tenor of the NAB's commentary on Luke would lead me to believe that the answer is no.

f. Lk. 10:18: "*I have observed Satan fall like lightning: the effect of the mission of the seventy-two is characterized by the Lucan Jesus as a symbolic fall of Satan...*"

And what exactly are we to make of this odd little term: "the Lucan Jesus"? Given that the NAB speaks elsewhere of the historical Jesus, it is one more stab at the notion that we can trust Luke to accurately relay what Jesus actually did and taught.

f. Lk. 17:20-37: "*To the question of the Pharisees about the time of the coming of God's kingdom, Jesus replies that the kingdom is among you (Luke 17:20-21). The emphasis has thus been shifted from an imminent observable coming of the kingdom to something that is already present in Jesus' preaching and healing ministry. Luke has also appended further traditional sayings of Jesus about the unpredictable suddenness of the day of the Son of Man...*"

The implication here, as in the comments on Luke 21:5-36, 8, is that St. Luke reworked the received teaching (that Jesus would return imminently), because this teaching had proven to be false.

f. Lk. 24:26: "*That the Messiah should suffer...: Luke is the only New Testament writer to speak explicitly of a suffering Messiah (Luke 24:26, 46; Acts 3:18; 17:3; 26:23). The idea of a suffering Messiah is not found in the Old Testament or in other Jewish literature prior to the New Testament period, although the idea is hinted at in Mark 8:31-33. See the notes on Matthew 26:63 and 26:67-68.*"

This is certainly one of the most outrageous footnotes contained within the NAB. It seriously claims that "Luke [a writer, incidentally, whose trustworthiness the NAB has gravely undermined] is the only New Testament writer to speak explicitly of a suffering Messiah." This claim is flatly false. The concept of the suffering Messiah is ubiquitous in the New Testament,¹⁷⁶ and is even expressed by Peter and Paul with those exact words.

Equally outrageous, in this footnote the NAB actually sides with modern Judaism against Christianity, and claims that the concept of a suffering Messiah is foreign to the Old Testament! Might I point the NAB scholars to the suffering servant oracles of Isaiah? Or Wisdom 2:10-24? Daniel 9:26 or Zechariah 12:10? The NAB even says in its commentary on Isaiah 53 that Christ is its perfect fulfillment. Why, then, does the NAB choose to contradict itself here? Or, according to the NAB's definition of terms, are these two propositions somehow not contradictory?

As a whole, the NAB commentary on Luke undermines the faith of Catholics, introducing doubts, multiplying difficulties, and leaving the reader with the uneasy and inchoate feeling that all herein is to some degree suspect. Although, standing alone, some of the NAB's claims may seem inconsequential, as a whole the myriad doubts which pervade the NAB constitute a formidable edifice. It must be torn down.

Ben Douglass

June 2, Anno Domini MMIX

[110] This solution is obvious to anyone willing to allow the Scriptures to speak with consistency. So Challoner, in *HOT*, p. 381; *KD*, Vol. 2, pp. 558-559; Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2nd ed. 2008) p. 238.

[111] Merrill, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

[112] Cf. *PDG*, 7-8.

[113] The NAB translates the various forms of *chadash* as restore (2 Chr 15:8; 24:4; Is 61:4), restored (Lam 5:21), renew (Job 10:17; Ps 51:12; 104:30), and renewed (Ps 103:5).

[114] The proper Catholic response to violent biblical passages such as this is supplied by St. Thomas Aquinas, cited *supra* in "Prolegomena to Genesis." Cf. also Bishop Challoner's commentary: "The great master of life and death (who cuts off one half of mankind whilst they are children) has been pleased sometimes to ordain that children be put to the sword, in detestation of the crimes of their parents, and that they might not live to follow the same wicked ways. But without such ordinance of God, it is not allowable in any wars, how just soever, to kill children" (in *HOT*, p. 358).

[115] Cf. *HG*, 22; *SP*, 19.

[116] R. E. Brown, *The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1973) p. 9.

[117] "An evil spirit, by divine permission, and for [Saul's] punishment, either possessed or obsessed him" (Challoner, in *HOT*, p. 360).

[118] *KD*, Vol. 2, p. 487.

[119] Cf. Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso*, Canto XX 37-39.

[120] David Goldstein, in *Honey from the Rock*, ed. Roy Schoeman (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 2007) p. 70.

[121] A prolific third century opponent of Christianity named Porphyry was the first to advance this claim. Eusebius of Caesarea and St. Jerome opposed him. Secularists have since taken up Porphyry's cause. Pope Leo XIII denounced as a detestable error the contention that "the prophecies and the oracles of God are... either predictions made up after the event or forecasts formed by the light of nature" (*PD*, 10).

[122] *SJNAB*, p. 1021.

[123] *SJNAB*, p. 983.

- [124] Cf. Daniel B. Wallace, "[Who is Ezekiel's Daniel](#)," retrieved 3/31/09.
- [125] *The Antiquities of the Jews*, Bk. 10, Chs. 10-11.
- [126] *Jerome's Commentary on Daniel*, trans. Gleason Archer (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1958) *passim*.
- [127] Cf. Edwin M. Yamauchi, "[Daniel and Contacts Between the Aegean and the Near East Before Alexander](#)," *Evangelical Quarterly* 53.1 (January-March 1981): 37-47; *KD*, Vol. 9, pp. 507-508.
- [128] K. A. Kitchen, "[The Aramaic of Daniel](#)," in *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel*, ed. D. J. Wiseman (London: The Tyndale Press, 1965) pp. 35-44.
- [129] *Ibid.*, pp. 31-79.
- [130] Nabonidus Chronicle, Years 7, 9-11.
- [131] *Ibid.*, Year 17.
- [132] D. J. Wiseman, "[Some Historical Problems in the Book of Daniel](#)," in *Notes on Some Problems in the Book of Daniel*, ed. D. J. Wiseman (London: The Tyndale Press, 1965) pp. 9-16.
- [133] Dr. Barry D. Smith, "The Book of Daniel and the Second-Temple Period," (paper for Atlantic Baptist University at <http://www.abu.nb.ca/Courses/NTIntro/InTest/Daniel.htm>) 7/12/04.
- [134] E.g., *The Histories*, 1:181,183.
- [135] "The statue denoted the four great empires of the Chaldees, Persians, Greeks, and Romans" (*HOT*, p. 1090; cf. *CCHS*, pp. 626-627; *KD*, Vol. 9, p. 654).
- [136] *The Histories*, 1:191.
- [137] "[S]ince in ch 8 the Medo-Persian empire is represented as one empire symbolized by one beast, so must it be represented by one beast or by one metal in the other visions. Any attempt, therefore, to split up the Medo-Persian empire into two separate and successive kingdoms is against the writer's view of history" (*CCHS*, p. 627).
- [138] *KD*, Vol. 9, p. 640.
- [139] *Ibid.*, p. 641.
- [140] "[I]t is permitted to no one to interpret Holy Scripture against... the unanimous agreement of the Fathers" (*DeRev*, par. 9).
- [141] So Challoner, in *HOT*, p. 1103; Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 1999) p. 200.
- [142] Cf. Harold Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1977) p. 138, in McDowell, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

[143] The Pontifical Biblical Commission decided, in its June 19, 1911 decree "Concerning the Author, the Date, and the Historical Truth of the Gospel according to Matthew" (AAS 3 [1911] 294ff; EB 401ff; Dz 2148 ff): "I: Having regard to the universal and unwavering agreement of the Church ever since the first centuries, an agreement clearly attested by the express witness of the Fathers, by the titles of the Gospel manuscripts, the most ancient versions of the sacred books and the lists handed on by the holy Fathers, by ecclesiastical writers, by Popes and Councils, and finally by the liturgical use of the Church in the East and in the West, may and should it be affirmed as certain that Matthew, the Apostle of Christ, was in fact the author of the Gospel current under his name? Answer: In the affirmative" (in *CCHS*, p. 70).

[144] Cf. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006) pp. 13-14.

[145] In Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:39:16. On the interpretation of *logia* I follow Bauckham, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

[146] *Against the Heresies*, 3:1:1.

[147] Origen, in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 6:25:3-4.

[148] In its 1912 decree "On the Synoptic Problem or the Mutual Relations of the First Three Gospels," the Pontifical Biblical Commission explicitly forbade catholic exegetes from advocating the source-critical theory here embraced by the NAB (AAS 4 [1912] 465; EB 117f; Dz 2164ff): "II: Ought those to be considered faithful to the above prescriptions, who without the support of any traditional evidence or historical argument readily embrace what is commonly called 'the two-document hypothesis', the purpose of which is to explain the composition of the Greek Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke chiefly by their dependence on the Gospel of Mark and a so-called collection of the discourses of our Lord; and are they consequently free to advocate it? Answer: In the negative to both parts" (in *CCHS*, p. 71).

[149] "In large measure the material of these discourses came to 'Matthew' from his tradition, but his work in modifying and adding to what he had received is abundantly evident" (*SJNAB*, p. 7 of the Revised New Testament, quotation marks mine). Cf. St. Clement of Rome, Epistle to the Corinthians, 45: "You have studied the Holy Scriptures, which are true and of the Holy Spirit. You know well that nothing unjust or fraudulent is written in them." St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against the Heresies*, 4:33:8: "[T]he Scriptures... have come down to us by being guarded against falsification, and are received without addition or deletion."

[150] *The Babylonian Talmud*, trans. Michael L. Rodkinson (Boston, MA: New Talmud Publishing Company, 1903) Vol. I, Tractate Shabbat, Chapter XVI. Burton Visotzky, in "Overturning the Lamp," *Journal of Jewish Studies*, Vol. 38 (1987) p. 78, translates the allusion to Matt 5:15-16 as "May your light shine forth like a lamp," which is more explicit.

[151] Incidentally, for the Pontifical Biblical Commission such prophecies are evidence of a pre 70 A.D. date of composition: "III: Can the composition of this original text be postponed till after the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, so that the prophecies it contains about that destruction were written after the event... Answer: In the negative" (Decree "Concerning the Author, the Date, and the Historical Truth of the Gospel according to Matthew," in *CCHS*, p. 70).

[152] *Supra*, f. 63.

[153] "But Faustus finds contradictions in the Gospels. Say, rather, that Faustus reads the Gospels in a wrong spirit, that he is too foolish to understand, and too blind to see. If you were animated with piety instead of being misled by party spirit, you might easily, by examining these passages, discover a wonderful and most instructive harmony among the writers. Who, in reading two narratives of the same event, would think of charging one or both of the authors with error or falsehood, because one omits what the other mentions, or one tells concisely, but with substantial agreement, what the other relates in detail, so as to indicate not only what was done, but also how it was done? This is what Faustus does in his attempt to impeach the truth of the Gospels; as if Luke's omitting some saying of Christ recorded in Matthew implied a denial on the part of Luke of Matthew's statement. There is no real difficulty in the case; and to make a difficulty shows want of thought, or of the ability to think" (St. Augustine, *Against Faustus*, 33:7).

[154] "But I shall not venture to suppose or to say such a thing [that Scripture contradicts itself]; and if a Scripture which appears to be of such a kind be brought forward, and if there be a pretext[for saying] that it is contrary[to some other], since I am entirely convinced that no Scripture contradicts another, I shall admit rather that I do not understand what is recorded, and shall strive to persuade those who imagine that the Scriptures are contradictory, to be rather of the same opinion as myself." (St. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 65)

[155] Pope St. Pius X, in *LS*, condemned the following notions: "33. Everyone who is not led by preconceived opinions can readily see that either Jesus professed an error concerning the immediate Messianic coming or the greater part of His doctrine as contained in the Gospels is destitute of authenticity... 52. It was far from the mind of Christ to found a Church as a society which would continue on earth for a long course of centuries. On the contrary, in the mind of Christ the kingdom of heaven together with the end of the world was about to come immediately." St. Pius also lamented such erroneous opinions in *PDG*, 36: "[The modernists] are ready to admit, nay, to proclaim that Christ Himself manifestly erred in determining the time when the coming of the Kingdom of God was to take place, and they tell us that we must not be surprised at this since even Christ was subject to the laws of life! After this what is to become of the dogmas of the Church?" Again, the NAB could perhaps salvage Christ's omniscience by trashing the authenticity of the sayings Matthew puts in His mouth.

[156] Cf. Witham, in *HNT*, p. 1435.

[157] *SJNAB*, p. 96.

[158] *Ibid.*, p. 95.

[159] *Ibid.*, p. 96.

[160] *Ibid.*

[161] Adv. Haer. 3:1:1.

[162] Adv. Marcionem 4.2.2.

[163] Decree "Concerning the Authors, Dates, and Historical Truth of the Gospels according to Mark and Luke," June 26, 1912 (AAS 4 [1912] 463ff; EB 408ff; Dz 2155ff), reply I.

[164] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., *Luke the Theologian* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1989) p. 2.

[165] Compare this with the reverent, face-value acceptance of everything the evangelists say which characterizes Catholic Biblical scholarship of happier times: "Since the Gospels are the source of virtually all that we really know about Christ's earthly life, it follows that the most accurate, authentic, and realistic account is that given by the evangelists themselves. The most that an author can do is to coordinate and harmonize those narratives, describe the background and the setting of the scenes and incidents, and explain the text when it presents some obscurity or difficulty" (Rev. John O'Brien, *Life of Christ* (New York, NY: John J. Crawley & Co., 1957) p. xi).

[166] "The faith demanded by the Christian Revelation stands on a different footing from the belief claimed by any other religion. Since it rests on divine authority, it implies an obligation to believe on the part of all to whom it is proposed; and faith being an act of the will as well as of the intellect, its refusal involves not merely intellectual error, but also some degree of moral perversity. It follows that doubt in regard to the Christian religion is equivalent to its total rejection, the ground of its acceptance being necessarily in every case the authority on which it is proposed... Doubt as to the Faith is thus impossible in the Catholic Church without infringing the principle of authority on which the Church itself depends... It will be evident from what has been said that doubt cannot coexist either with faith or knowledge in regard to any given subject; faith and doubt are mutually exclusive..." (The 1914 Catholic Encyclopedia, Doubt; cf. CCC 2088)

[167] "The holy virgin appears to confine the power of God within as narrow limits as Zacharias had formerly done; for what is beyond the common order of nature, she concludes to be impossible. She reasons in this manner. I know not a man: how then can I believe that what you tell me will happen? We ought not to give ourselves very much trouble, to acquit her of all blame. She ought immediately to have risen by faith to the boundless power of God, which is not at all lettered to natural means, but sways the whole world" (John Calvin, *Commentaries, Vol 31, Harmony of the Evangelists*, ix, vii).

[168] AAS 4 [1912] 463ff; EB 408ff; Dz 2155ff.

[169] Walter Brandmüller, *Light and Shadows: Church History amid Faith, Fact, and Legend*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2009) pp. 87-89. Cf. Sal Ciresi, "[Christmas According to the Evangelists: The Veracity of the Gospel Testimonies](#)" in *The Latin Mass*, Vol. 15, No. 5, Advent/Christmas 2006.

[170] Francois Bovon, *Luke I*, trans. Christine M. Thomas (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002) p. 99.

[171] Cf. Footnotes to 1:19; 2:22-40; 3:1-23; 4:18, 21, 23, 25-26, 34; 8:40-56; 9:32; 10:18; 12:10-12; 13:1-5; 16:14-15, 16.

[172] Cf. Footnotes to 4:16-30, 23; 5:1-11; 9:18-22, 23; 9:51-18:14; 11:13; 12:45; 16:8b-13; 18:31; 19:11-27; 20:15; 21:5-36, 8.

[173] *HNT*, p. 1252.

[174] Cf. in the Gospel of Luke alone: 1:43; 2:11; 5:12; 6:5; 7:6; 9:54, 59, 61; 10:17, 40; 11:1; 12:41; 13:23; 17:37; 18:41; 19:8, 31; 20:44; 22:33.

[175] Most Rev. Alban Goodier, S.J., *The Public Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Vol. I* (New York, NY: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1944) p. 176.

[176] E.g., Matt 17:22-23; 2 Cor 1:5; Phil 3:10; Col 1:24; Heb 2:9-10; 5:8; 9:26; 13:12; 1 Pet 1:11; 2:21; 3:18; 4:1, 13; 5:1

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