

The Bible: Introduction (II)

Sunday 5th July 2020



'Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit.' (#81 Catechism of the Catholic Church)

This quotation from the catechism conveys so simply the awesomeness of God's presence in the Bible. He speaks to us through His Sacred Scripture. He wants to speak to you, now, through His holy word. To begin to listen to God and understand what He is saying to us we must first learn the language of Scripture. Before Shakespeare composed a sonnet or Yeats a heart rendering poem both had to learn their ABC. An alphabet is the nuts and bolts of any language and as we begin our time of wandering through the Bible we need to know what the nuts and bolts for beginning to grapple with Scripture are.

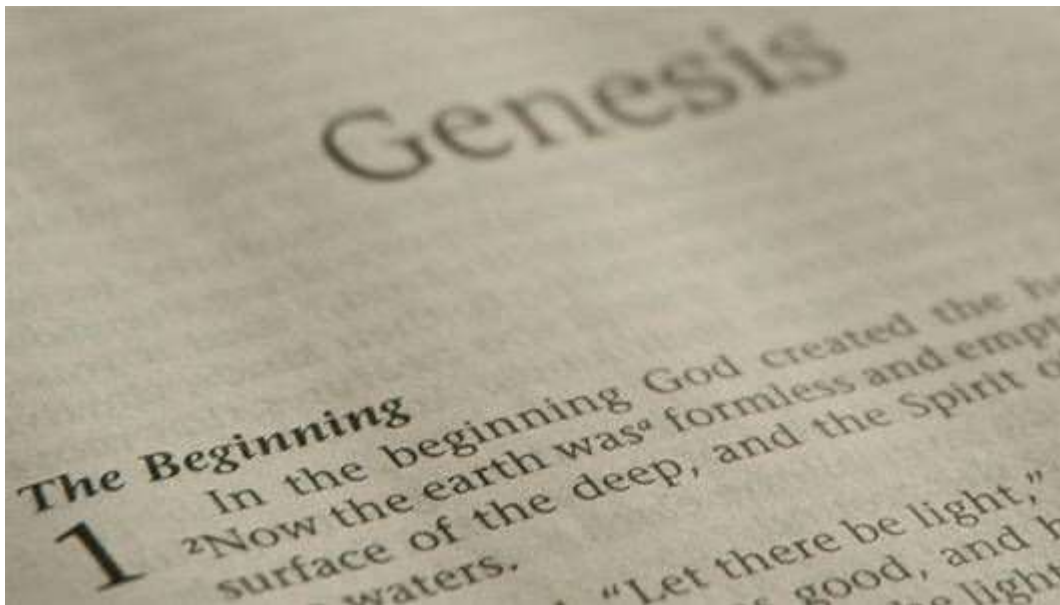
The first thing is to learn how to find a biblical reference. Many people will know how to do this already but for those who are unsure let's remind ourselves.

'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' (Gn 1:1)

At the end of the sentence you will notice (Gn 1:1). 'Gn' is the abbreviation for the book of Genesis. If you look at the contents page of your Bible you will see the book of Genesis listed and next to it, in brackets the abbreviation (Gn). If you

continue looking through the rest of the contents page you will see that all the books that make up the Bible have an abbreviation after their title. Exodus (**Ex**), Joshua (**Jos**), Tobit (**Tb**), Isaiah (**Is**), Maccabees (**M**), The Gospel of Matthew (**Mt**), The Gospel of John (**Jn**), St. Paul's Letter to the Romans (**Rm**), St. Paul's Second Letter to the Thessalonians (**2 Th**) etc.

The number that comes immediately after 'Gn' is 1. This number indicates the chapter. The book of Genesis contains 50 chapters and if you quickly flick through Genesis you will see how each page is dotted with large bold numbers.



After each large bold number you will also see little numbers printed within the text and these are the verses. So when you see the biblical reference **Gn1:1**, it is referring to the Book of Genesis, Chapter 1, verse 1. The verse numbers always appear after the : colon.

For those who want to practice getting to grips with biblical referencing here are some examples you might want to look up.

- **Gn 2:1**. If you have found it correctly it should say: '*Thus heaven and earth were completed with all their array.*'
- **Si 7:10**. This reference from Ecclesiasticus should say: '*Do not be impatient in prayer; do not neglect to give alms.*'

- Ho 11:9. The words of the prophet should read: *'I will not give rein to my fierce anger, I will not destroy Ephraim again, for I am God, not man: I am the Holy One in your midst and have no wish to destroy.'*
- Mk 10:12. Jesus says in Mark's Gospel: *'And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another she is guilty of adultery too.'*
- 1 Cor 13:11. Saint Paul writes: *'When I was a child, I used to talk like a child, and think like a child, and argue like a child, but now I am a man, all childish ways are put behind me.'*

For some people finding biblical references is easy and for others it may be very new. I hope the above explanation proves useful to the novices and a reminder for the initiated.

The next Bible Introduction will explain the three points that the Second Vatican Council published to help us interpret the true sense of Sacred Scripture in accordance with the Holy Spirit. After this we will then begin our virtual tour of the Old Testament looking at those five books that form the Pentateuch/Torah.

God Bless and keep praying
Fr. O'Brien