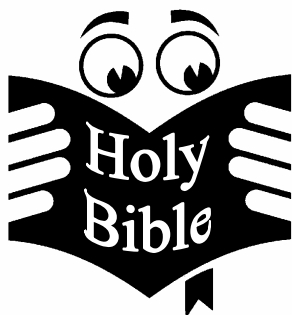


## Bible Tidbits - August 2006:

### Fundamentalism vs. Historical Criticism



A selection of facts and information to help you discover more of the riches about Sacred Scripture.

*Each month we'll offer you several new tidbits in print and on-line: In print on the reverse side of the OLV Activities Calendar; On-line on OLV's Web Page ([ourladyofvictorytallmadge.parishesonline.com](http://ourladyofvictorytallmadge.parishesonline.com)). The Tidbits will be on the Home Page—below the Question of the Week!*

**Fundamentalists** agree on five basic fundamentals, with some congregations including up to seven or eight more. Among their fundamentals is the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures, which is the most significant fundamental on which the others rest. They hold that all of Scripture, the very words themselves, are equally inspired. They see the Bible as free from error, not only in theology, but also in science, geography, cosmos and history. The Bible, for them, requires no interpretation. They view God as the author of the Bible. Therefore, the biblical words are divine words, not human words. Fundamentalism is right to insist on the divine inspiration of the Bible, but it demands an unshakeable adherence to rigid doctrinal points of view. It rejects all questioning of the Bible and any kind of critical research.

In contrast, the Catholic Church, and more specifically the Pontifical Biblical Commission stated in 1993: "As regards relationships with God, fundamentalism seeks to escape any closeness of the divine and the human. It refuses to admit that the inspired Word of God has been expressed in human language and that this Word has been expressed, under divine inspiration, by human authors possessed of limited capacities and resources."

In 1902 the pope set up this Commission to develop rules for modern biblical criticism. Darwin's theory of evolution (1860) and its controversy over the Book of Genesis eventually gave rise to this historically critical look and study of the Bible. The Bible was now being studied in its historical and cultural context. **Historical criticism** seeks knowledge about the author (background, goals, etc.), about the situation in which the author wrote (what problems was the author facing? etc.), and about the audience to whom the author was writing (what were their problems? what would they have understood?). In other words, historical criticism involves asking about a biblical book the same kind of question that one would ask about any other book to discover what message was being conveyed. What did the author really want to say to those to whom he was writing?

Historical criticism is not a threat to our faith. Rather, it enhances our faith, giving us a better and deeper understanding of the Scriptures. For example, the Book of Revelation, is the hardest book for many to read because, first of all it is apocalyptic literature and filled with many images and symbols. But doing research with a good Catholic Commentary will help you to discover that it is a book that was written to give hope to Christians of the first century who were being persecuted by the Roman Emperor. And in uncovering its message through study will help you to discover the power of the book for your own life.