

Catholics Read the Scriptures: Commentary on Benedict XVI's *Verbum Domini*

Bevil Bramwell

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Catholics Read the Scriptures is a thorough theological reference text designed to aid in the lay study of Pope Benedict XVI's *Verbum Domini*.

Priest Bevil Bramwell's insightful religious book *Catholics Read the Scriptures* examines the implications of Pope Benedict XVI's apostolic exhortation *Verbum Domini*, which was written to clarify the Roman Catholic Church's position on understanding the Bible and applying its teachings.

The book opens by sharing the historical background of Pope Benedict's document—a series of explorations of scripture as the divine word, its application to the Catholic Church, and its applications in the wider world. Bramwell acts as an apologist for the text, calling *Verbum Domini* a “sleeper” document that reverses a history of secularization in favor of a rediscovery of scripture. He asserts that Catholics, and the Catholic Church, had been moving away from treating the Bible as central to all lives, leaving its study to specialists and the clergy.

Bramwell's text presupposes an acceptance of Catholic doctrine as it is described in the *Verbum Domini*. Still, its commentary and discussions come in clear, nontechnical language; it takes pains to explain the religious language and specialized terms it uses. Each article of the original document is explained and expounded upon, as with the lengthy chapter “The Word Who Speaks,” in which the complex theology of divine revelation and the personhood of God are unpacked with care.

The book includes both interesting topics of discussion that draw clear lines between the focal text's arguments and contemporary society (in discussing internet culture, Bramwell argues that “there is a close connection between human beings and the real that has to be asserted again and again”) and references to thousand-year-old writings that are ably made to connect to the contemporary world (as with the impact of human migration on the Catholic Church). However, some of its work is devoted to mere reproductions of the source text. In its discussion of the practice of *Lectio Divina*, or divine reading, for example, this book restates what was clear in the original text. Still, there are helpful interpretive tools shared throughout, including a list of abbreviations, an appendix that explains the traditional Catholic view of anthropology that undergirds the book's arguments, a bibliography, and end notes. The book's citations are thorough and relevant and encourage further study.

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MATT BENZING (November 4, 2022)

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