

DON BOSCO AND THE BIBLE

Part I: Biblical Citations¹

Source:

La Bibbia con don Bosco, Una lectio divina salesiana, 1. L'Antico Testamento, Morand Wirth.

In Don Bosco's writing and in his words passed on to us by his biographers, one can discover 6,000 citations or allusions to the bible. Two thousand are from the Old Testament; two thousand from the gospels; and another two thousand from the rest of the New Testament.

The books he most often cites are: Genesis (foundations of the faith), Exodus (the Ten Commandments), the Psalms (worship and prayer), the wisdom books, Sirach in particular (for their educative value), and the prophet Isaiah (the announcement of the Messiah).

Don Bosco was convinced that the Old Testament is fundamental for the moral and religious education of youth and that it is the source of the spiritual life and the call to sanctity.

BOOKMARKS IN HIS BREVIARY

Of the total 11 citations from Scriptures, ten are from the OT and one from the NT. (We do not find the NT citation here because the book limits itself to the OT.) The interpretation and translation (from Latin) is of Don Lemoyne and found in MB II, 523-526.

1. "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with first fruits of all your produce; then will your barns be filled with grain, with new wine your vats will overflow" (Prv 3: 9-10). God can not be outdone in generosity. [MB II, 524]
2. "Keep your way far from her, approach not the door of her house" (Prv 5:8). Flee from every dangerous occasion. [MB II, 524]
3. "Receive my instruction in preference to silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold" (Prv 8:10). Detachment from earthly goods [MB II, 524]
4. "All rivers go to the sea, yet never does the sea become full" (Eccl 1:8). Providence puts everything in order. [MB II, 524]
5. "I recognized that there is nothing better than to be glad and to do well during life" (Eccl 3:12). Joy that is born of peace of heart. [MB II, 524]

¹ Don Bosco used the Latin Vulgate text. The English translations are generally taken from the New American Bible. At times the Latin Vulgate text that Don Bosco used does not agree with the NAB text. When this happens, the English Douay-Rheims Bible is used.

6. "My son, take care of your father when he is old; grieve him not as long as he lives" (Sir 3:12). Let us defend as our own his honor and those of the superiors. [MB 525]
7. "My son, rob not the poor man of his livelihood (alms); force not the eyes of the needy to turn away" (Sir 4:1). Alms are a debt of charity. [MB II, 525]
8. "If you have the knowledge, answer your neighbor; if not, put your hand over your mouth" (Sir 5:14). Think before talking. [MB II, 524-525]
9. "No matter the wrong, do no violence to your neighbor, and do not walk the path of arrogance" (Sir 10: 6). Love all to bring all to the Lord. [MB II, 525]
10. "The Lord is good, a refuge on the day of distress" (Na 1:7). Trust in God. [MB II, 524]

MORAL MAXIMS

The Moral maxims have been added to the small manual, "Easy Way of Learning Sacred History" of 1855 (MF, 91-92 [Opere Edite VI, 49-143]). Of the total 27 biblical citations, 18 are from the OT.

1. "Birds are born to fly; man to work" (Job 5:7 Vulgate. *Note NAB translation: But man himself begets mischief as sparks fly upwards.*)
2. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps 111: 10).
3. At the point of death, man will gather the fruit of his good works. (cf. Ps 126: 6 - "Although they go forth weeping, carrying the seed to be sown, they shall come back rejoicing, carrying their sheaves.")
4. "Love not sleep, lest you be reduced to poverty; eyes wide open mean abundant food" (Prv 20:13).
5. "He who loves pleasure will suffer want; he who loves wine and perfume will not be rich" (Prv 21:17).
6. "Train a boy in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not swerve from it" (Prv 22:6).
7. "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth" (Eccl 12:1).
8. Never fail to tell the truth on account of shame because that apparent embarrassment shall be to you the cause of glory before men and before God (cf. Wis 1:6? *Note NAB translation: "...Because God is the witness of his inmost self and the sure observer of his heart and the listener to his tongue.*)
9. "A lying mouth slays the soul" (Wis 1:11).

10. "But the souls of the just are in the hand of God, and the torment of death shall not touch them" (Wis 3:1).
11. To him who loves God all things come out well (cf. Wis 3:9? *Note the English translation of the Vulgate: "They that trust in him, shall understand the truth: and they that are faithful in love shall rest in him: for grace and peace is to his elect.."*)
12. "For he who despises wisdom and instruction is doomed. Vain is his hope, fruitless are his labors, and worthless are his works" (Wis 3:11).
13. "Wisdom is better than strength" (Wis 6:1 Vulgate). (*But note the NAB translation: "Hear, therefore, kings, and understand; learn, you magistrates of the earth's expanse...."*)
14. Let us do good while there is time (Wisdom ?)
15. He who fears the Lord honors his father and his mother and will glory in serving them who have given him life (cf Sir 3:7 - "He who fears the LORD honors his father, and serves his parents as rulers.").
16. Parental blessing strengthens the home of the children; their curse destroys it to the very foundation (cf Sir 3:9 - "For a father's blessing gives a family firm roots, but a mother's curse uproots the growing plant.")
17. "A hungry man grieve not, a needy man anger not" (Sir 4:2).
18. Blessed is the man who from his youth is accustomed to observe the divine law (cf. Lam 3:7 - "It is good for a man to bear the yoke from his youth.")

INSCRIPTIONS ALONG THE PORTICOS OF THE ORATORY

The inscriptions were in Latin with a translation in Italian. According to Don Lemoyne, they were successively added in 1856 (cf. MB V, 543-547), in 1861 (cf. MB VI, 948-949), and in 1864 (cf. MB VII, 426). Of the 39 biblical citations, 28 are from the OT.

1. "You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain" (Ex 20:7) (MB V, 545).
2. "Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day" (Ex 20:8) (MB V, 546).
3. "Honor your father and your mother that you may have a long life in the land: (Ex 20:12) (MB V, 546).
4. "You shall not kill" (Ex 20:13) (MB V, 546).
5. "You shall not commit adultery" (Ex 20:14) (MB V, 546).
6. "You shall not steal" (Ex 20: 15) (MB V, 546).
7. "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Ex 20:16)

- (MB V, 546).
8. "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife" (from the Latin). You shall not desire the person of others (from the Italian). (Ex 20:17 - "... You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male or female slave...") (MB V, 546)
 9. You shall not covet the house and servant of your neighbor (from the Latin). You shall not covet the things of your neighbor (from the Italian). (cf. Ex 20:17 - "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. ... nor his ox or ass, nor anything else that belongs to him.") (MB V, 546-547).
 10. He who curses father or mother or strikes them shall be punished with death (Ex 21:15.17 - "Whoever strikes his father or mother shall be put to death. Whoever curses his father or mother shall be put to death.") (MB V, 546).
 11. "He who violates it (Sabbath) shall be put to death" (Ex 31:14) (MB V, 546).
 12. "He who blasphemes the name of the Lord shall be punished with death" (Lv 24:16) (MB V, 545).
 13. Until they confess their iniquities and those of their elders, the iniquities with which they have offended me and rebelled against me. (Lv 26:40 - "Thus they will have to confess that they and their fathers were guilty of having rebelled against me and of having defied me.") (MB V, 544).
 14. "You shall adore the Lord your God and only him shall you serve" (Dt 6:13) (MB V, 545).
 15. And standing before the Lord they confessed their sins and the iniquity of their fathers (Neh 9:2 - "...then stood forward and confessed their sins and the guilty deeds of their fathers." (MB V, 544).
 16. Alms free from death, cleanse sins, and make one find mercy and eternal life (Tb 12:9 - "For almsgiving saves one from death and expiates every sin. Those who regularly give alms shall enjoy a full life.") (MB V, 547).
 17. Those who commit sin and iniquity are the enemies of their own soul (Tb 12:10 - "But those habitually guilty of sin are their own worst enemies.") (MB V, 545).
 18. But one of the Maccabean youth who was the eldest said: "What do you want or what do you want to know from us? We are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our ancestors which God has given to us." (2Mac 7:2 - "One of the brothers, speaking for the others, said: 'What do you expect to achieve by questioning us? We are ready to die

- than transgress the law of our ancestors”) (MB V, 543).
19. His bones shall be imbued with the vices of his youth. They shall lie with him in the dust. (Job 20:11 - “Though his frame is full of youthful vigor, this shall lie with him in the dust.”) (MB VI, 949).
 20. “Then I acknowledged my sin to you, my guilt I covered not. I said: “I confess my faults to the Lord,” and you took away the guilt of my sin” (Ps 31:5 Vulgate [Ps 32:5]) (MB VI, 544).
 21. “Do not hand over to the wild beasts the lives of those who acknowledge you and do not forget forever the lives of the poor” (Ps 73: 19 Vulgate) (NAB Ps 74: 19 - “Give not to the vulture the life of your dove; be not forever unmindful of the lives of your afflicted ones.”) (MB VII, 426).
 22. Let us run and present ourselves to him in prayer; let us celebrate his praises in psalms. (Ps 95:2 [Ps 94:2 Vulgate] - “Let us greet him with thanksgiving; let us joyfully sing psalms to him.”) (MB VII, 426).
 23. “He who conceals his sins shall not prosper but he who confesses and abandons them shall gain mercy” (Prv 28:13) (MB VII, 426).
 24. “The way of an eagle in the air, the way of a serpent upon a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man in *youth*” (Prv 30: 19). (Note the NAB translation. Instead of “youth”, it has “maiden”.) (MB VII, 426).
 25. “A lying mouth slays the soul” (Prv 1:11) (MB V, 546).
 26. Do not be ashamed to confess your sins; but do not subject yourself to anyone in order to sin (Sir 4:31 Vulgate) (MB VII, 426).
 27. Give thanks while you are alive; while you are alive and well, give thanks and praise God, and glory in his mercies. (Sir 17:27 Vulgate) (MB VI, 949).
 28. “It is good for a man to bear the yoke from his youth” (Lam 3:27) (MB VI, 949).