

Biblia Sacra

by Scott Bayer, Ph.D. and Elisabeth Furbush, Ph.D.

Reviewed by Martha Robinson

Purchase details: *Biblia Sacra* Comb-bound paperback workbook and cassette tapes, Level I -- \$80, Level II -- \$90. 2008 - Appears to be no longer available for purchase new.

Biblia Sacra offers an opportunity to study Latin using only the text of St. Jerome's [*Latin Vulgate*](#). This self-teaching program requires little to no participation on the part of the homeschooling parent. Everything the student needs to gain a basic understanding of Latin is on the cassette tapes and in the workbook.

At the beginning of the first Level I tapes, Dr. Bayer explains the reasons for studying Latin. He suggests that Latin will provide a solid foundation for further studies in many subjects, that college entrance exam scores are greatly increased by studying Latin, and that the student will be able to find a more satisfying experience in studying Scriptures in Latin. Dr. Bayer recommends that the student should take his time in studying and make sure to grasp each concept fully and master all vocabulary before moving on.

This program is not intended to be a comprehensive study of Latin, but rather to give the student the basics of Latin to help him with other studies, and specifically to allow the student to read the Vulgate. The Vulgate was written in common Latin, so the Latin learned here will not be exactly the same as what the student would see in Cicero's writings, for example.

The format of *Biblia Sacra* is primarily auditory. Dr. Bayer speaks on the tapes exactly as he would in a classroom. He reviews vocabulary, explains concepts, and quizzes the students. Then, he rings a bell and tells the student to do exercises in the workbook and check them with the answers in the back of the workbook. Music is playing in the background of the lecture. Classical pronunciation is used, and speaking the vocabulary is an important part of this program.

Level I: Level one focuses on vocabulary and very basic grammar. The student is reading from the Vulgate New Testament from the very first lesson using a deductive immersion method. A basic vocabulary list is introduced, and then the student is encouraged to look at several verses from Matthew and pick out the words that look similar (except for the change in declension endings) and try to translate. The concept of declensions is indirectly introduced with a discussion of subject and direct object in an example sentence. Several verb paradigms are taught. Dr. Bayer mentions several times that if the student does not understand something, it is because he does not yet know Latin grammar and that the study of grammar will come later.

The Level I workbook includes 61 pages of exercises, King James Version translation of the selected passages, and a full answer key. The exercises are primarily fill-in-the-blank, but matching and puzzles are also included. Interesting illustrations including copies of wood cuts, the Vulgate, and line drawings are shown throughout the workbook.

Dr. Bayer recommends *Biblia Sacra I* for students as young as eight years old (with parental assistance.) He feels that the average twelve-year-old should take about six months to complete the

program.

Level II: The first fifteen lessons of Level II use verses from Genesis to teach Latin. After reading the verses in English from the King James Version, Dr. Bayer introduces the vocabulary, grammar concepts, and the verses in Latin. Again, music plays in the background of the lecture, and a bell is rung to signal when it is time to do a workbook exercise.

Grammar is emphasized in Level II. Lessons "O" through "Z" cover grammar only, rather than passages from the Bible. All concepts are explained in simple terms on the tape. The active and passive voices of all conjugations are introduced but not necessarily studied in depth. Several irregular verbs are presented, and all five declensions of nouns are taught. Study of derivatives is also included. Sentences used for translations, both Latin to English and English to Latin, have Christian content.

The Level II workbook offers 110 pages of exercises, King James Version translations of passages, and an answer key. The format is very similar to Level I.

Dr. Bayer says that a child as young as twelve could complete sections A through K of Level II, but that lessons L through Z would probably be best suited for an older child. Level II might take as long as eighteen months to complete. From one to two high school credits, dependent upon the depth of study of Level II, could be awarded for completing both levels of the program.

After completion of *Biblia Sacra Level II*, the author recommends further study using *Wheelock Latin*. Alternatively, Dr. Bayer suggests that an older student or adult up to the challenge could begin reading directly from the Vulgate using a Latin dictionary to assist in translation.

Recommendation: *Biblia Sacra* would be a good choice for a student who is ready to work independently in Latin studies. All material used in this program is Christian-oriented with much of it coming directly from the Vulgate, so there will be no concerns about material for all Christian families. *Biblia Sacra* would be particularly helpful to auditory learners.

Biblia Sacra does not have the slick style of many professionally done programs. The simple formatting and lecture style tapes will not dazzle you with glitzy appearance and sound. This is a program to buy for content rather than appearance.

Biblia Sacra Level I would be an excellent follow-up after *Latin's Not So Tough*, *Matin Latin*, or *Latin Primer*. It also would work well as a vocabulary oriented, grammar staged program before pursuing more intense Latin courses. As this program emphasizes speaking, it would be best for families who are committed to classical pronunciation. I think it would be difficult and somewhat confusing for most children to switch to ecclesiastical pronunciation after using *Biblia Sacra*.

The first half of *Biblia Sacra Level II* continues in the same style as Level I and would provide good continuity to the student. I would suggest switching to a more thorough and slow-paced Latin program such as *Ecce Romani* after lesson K and using the remainder of *Biblia Sacra Level II* as a faith-based grammar supplement.

(review was taken from www.homeschoolchristian.com)