

Response of the Pontifical Biblical Commission

II

Concerning the Narratives in the Historical Books Which Have Only the Appearance of Being Historical

June 23, 1905

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The Biblical Commission answers the following question: Whether we may admit as a principle of sound exegesis the opinion which holds that those books of Holy Scripture which are regarded as historical, either wholly or in part, sometimes narrate what is not history properly so-called and objectively true, but only have the appearance of history and are intended to convey a meaning different from the strictly literal or historical sense of the words.

Answer: In the negative; excepting always the case — not to be easily or rashly admitted, and then only on the supposition that it is not opposed to the teaching of the Church and subject to her decision — that it can be proved by solid arguments that the sacred writer did not intend to give a true and strict history, but proposed rather to set forth, under the guise and form of history, a parable or an allegory or some meaning distinct from the strictly literal or historical signification of the words.