

TIPS FOR USING ATLA VIA EBSCO

The American Theological Library Association Religion database provides good coverage of Christianity and selective coverage of other world religions, especially Islam, Hinduism and Judaism. It indexes articles and book reviews from most major English language theological journals and from some especially important non-English journals (particularly German). It also indexes essays/chapters from selected festschriften, conference proceedings, and other multi-author books. ATLA covers literature on Bible, theology, church history, pastoral ministries, Christian education, and world missions. ATLA focuses on scholarly theological literature but includes a significant sampling of non-scholarly publications about popular Christian culture and church life especially from the mainline Protestant viewpoint. (For additional coverage of popular evangelical magazines, see Christian Periodical Index.) It provides very limited and incomplete coverage of denominationally specific matters like canon law, and it tries not to duplicate PM and denominational indexes. ATLA also indexes a very small fraction of Christian fiction, short stories, poems, and children's literature. As of 2009, ATLA cites 561K articles, 516K reviews, and 233K essays. About 350K journal articles and book reviews are available online.

We access the ATLA database through the EBSCO interface. This guide assumes you are already familiar with generic EBSCO features. If you are not, check <http://library.dts.edu/Pages/RM/DBM/EBSCO/>. Assuming that you already know how to use the EBSCO interface in general, let's turn our attention to ATLA-specific issues not covered in the generic EBSCO documentation.

BIBLE SEARCHES IN ATLA

Bible passages are designated in two different ways in ATLA, using two different fields. Understanding how these fields are used is the key to successful Bible searching. This is particularly true because ATLA does not follow the Library of Congress conventions for Bible entries.


Title:	How Did They Suppose "the <i>Perfect</i>" Would Come? 1 Corinthians 13.8-12 in Patristic Exegesis.
Author(s):	Shogren, Gary Steven
Source:	Journal of Pentecostal Theology no 15 O 1999, p 99-121.
Subjects:	Bible. Corinthians I 11-14 ; Fathers of the church--Biblical interpretation ; Heresies and heretics (Christianity)--0030-600 ; Knowledge. Theory of (Religion) ; Eschatology--History of doctrines--0030-600
Scripture Citation:	Corinthians, 1st 13:8-12 

Figure 1000: Both Bible as Subject field and a Scripture Citation field

USING THE SUBJECT FIELD

ATLA uses a Bible subject heading which looks like this:

>>Subject: Bible. Corinthians I 11-14

There is a period after Bible. First epistle is indicated by Roman numeral "I" (uppercase i) and chapters by Arabic "11-14". Notice that specific verses are not indicated at all. In fact, even specific chapters are lacking; rather, ranges of chapters are used. For 1 Cor the ranges are 1-4, 5-10, 11-14, 15-16. To obtain a work about chapter 13 you must search for "11-14" and then browse through the list of all items for that range of chapters.

But how are you to know what ranges of chapters are grouped together? How are you to know it is 11-14 and not some other range? One approach is to do a keyword search like "1 Cor 11" and then look at a few matching records to see what subject heading is used. Another approach is to browse the subject index.

Browse an Index:	Subjects All	<input type="button" value="Browse"/>
Browse for:	bible. corinthians	
Term		Records Count
<input type="checkbox"/> bible. corinthians		142
<input type="checkbox"/> bible. corinthians i 1-4		220
<input type="checkbox"/> bible. corinthians i 11-14		455
<input type="checkbox"/> bible. corinthians i 15-16		262
<input type="checkbox"/> bible. corinthians i 5-10		406

Figure 1010: Browsing Bible entries in Subject index

Notice that the period after Bible is necessary when you browse.

The ATLA subject field is indexed so more specific headings for chapters “post up” to the book as a whole. For example all the records under

>>Subject: Bible. Ephesians 4–6

are also under

>>Subject: Bible. Ephesians

A subject search for Bible passages limits searching to broad ranges of chapters. To search for material on a single book, chapter, or verse, use the Scriptures button on the bar above the search boxes. To search for ranges of verses or chapters, use the Scripture citation field.

USING THE SCRIPTURE CITATION FIELD

In 1986 ATLA added a separate Scripture citation field and began to provide chapter and verse specific citations.

>>Scripture citation: Corinthians, 1st 13:8–12

Notice ordinal, 1st, and Arabic numerals for both chapters and verses.

Browse an Index:	Scripture Citation	<input type="button" value="Browse"/>
Browse for:	corinthians, 1st 13:7	
Term		Records Count
<input type="checkbox"/> corinthians, 1st 13:7		1
<input type="checkbox"/> corinthians, 1st 13:8		3
<input type="checkbox"/> corinthians, 1st 13:8-12		2
<input type="checkbox"/> corinthians, 1st 13:8-13		4
<input type="checkbox"/> corinthians, 1st 13:9		1

Figure 1020: Browsing Scripture citation index

The Scripture citation field is indexed so that verse-specific entries post up to chapter specific entries, and chapters post up to the book as a whole. For example, the search

>>Scripture citation: Corinthians, 1st 13

will pick up all specific verses on chapter 13 in the SC index such as 13:8–12.

Click the Indexes button near the top of the page and choose Scripture Citation as the index. If you are browsing for specific verses, then explore the next and previous pages. One reason is that the system sorts character by character, not numerically, and the exploratory browse helps you find unexpected sequences spread over multiple pages. Notice how 2:1 and 2:2 are separated in the following browse:

2:1
2:10
2:11–16
2:13
next page . . .
2:15
2:2 (note 2 between 15 and 20)
2:20

Another reason to explore the next and previous pages is that a specific verse can be hiding in a range of verses sorted to another page. In the following example,

. . .
2:31–38
2:31–33
2:32
2:33
next page . . .
2:34
3:1

. . . verse 34 is on the first page in the entry 2:31–38 and on the second page as 2:34.

Note also that colons sort after numbers, so Genesis 1:1 is separated from Genesis 1 as follows.

Genesis 1
Genesis 1–11
Genesis 1–2
Genesis 1–4
Genesis 10
Genesis 11
Genesis 19
Genesis 1:1
Genesis 1:1–13
Genesis 1:2
Genesis 2

Because of problems like this, you can just search for chapters in the SC field without specifying verses. (Remember verses post up to chapters, so everything indexed under Genesis 1:1 is also indexed under the chapter Genesis 1.)

It is better to search the Scripture citation field from the Index than from the search screen if you have a range of verses to search. For example, a search for

>>Scripture citation: Exodus 19:10–15

fails. A search for

>>Scripture citation: Exodus 19

gives over 200 results. It is time-consuming to search through these results to find relevant citations. But by going to the Scripture citation index, you can choose verse ranges that include or overlap with Exod 19:10–15 and search for them.

Records cataloged since 1986 often (not always) have both a Bible subject field AND a Scripture citation field:

>>Subject: Bible. Corinthians I 11–14

>>Scripture citation: Corinthians, 1st 13:8-12

Some pre-1986 works are also cataloged with the SC field because ATLA has done some retrospective cataloging after the 1986 rule change, and they continue to update old records with the SC field.

Although there are many exceptions, the recent practice seems to be that works about broad topics like authorship or textual criticism of an entire book of the Bible, or works about a large portion of a book, will have a subject heading but not a Scripture citation field. Some pre-1986 records appear to have been assigned subjects by machine rather than by a human being in that the categories are too broad to be of much help.

USING THE SCRIPTURES BUTTON

There is yet another means of looking for material by Bible passage. This is called “Scriptures” on the menu bar but “The Hierarchical Scripture Authority” on the display page. It is based on the Scripture citation field, but displayed in a unique way to help get around the range problem. All verses and chapters implicit in a range are made explicit in the display. For example, checking Genesis 1:2 in the Hierarchical Scripture Authority section will include articles indexed for Genesis 1:1-3 (and more) in the Scripture Citation Index.

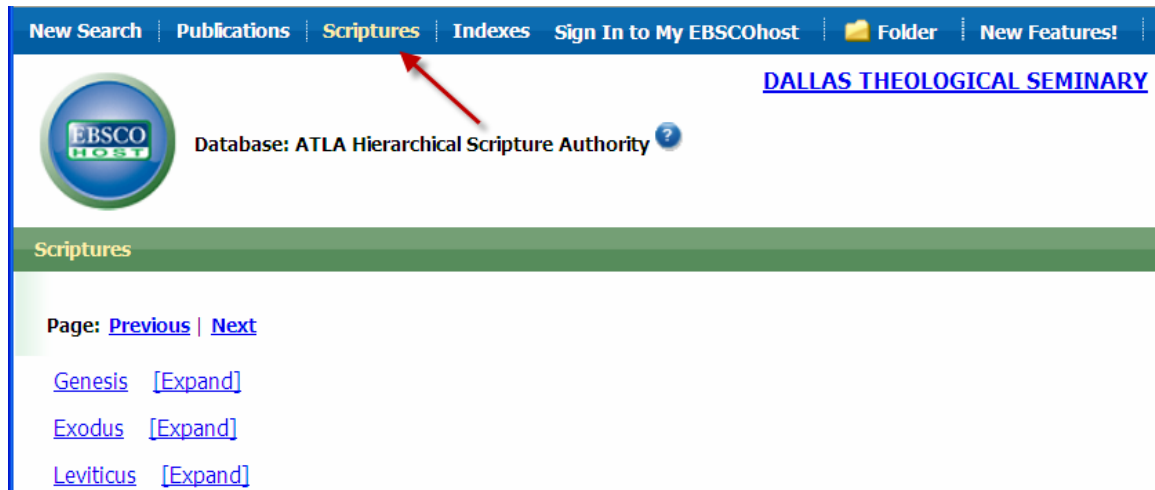


Figure 1030: Scriptures button first level of hierarchy

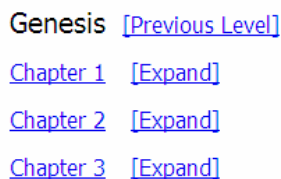


Figure 1040: Scriptures button, second level of hierarchy

To find material on a book, click the book name. To choose a chapter of a book, click Expand beside the book title. Then click the chapter you wish or click Expand and choose a verse. You can only choose one verse, chapter, or book. If you wish to search a range of verses or chapters, use the Scripture citation field.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR BIBLE LOOKUP

Here are some general guidelines for finding works on Bible passages in ATLA.

1. The Scripture button is the easiest way to find works on whole chapters or single verses. The results list will not be comprehensive, however, because many records lack an SC field and will thus not be found with the Scripture button search. Also, you cannot select multiple verses with the Scripture button.

2. The Scripture Citation browse provides flexible access to ranges of verses or chapters. For best results, begin by browsing the Scripture citation field. Browsing will confirm what the correct format is and will identify ranges of chapters or verses you may wish to include. You can also execute a Scripture citation search without browsing, designating a chapter but not verses, e.g.,

:>>Scripture citation: Corinthians, 1st 13

The main disadvantage of a Scripture citation lookup is that you cannot get comprehensive retrieval this way because of the records that have Bible subject fields but lack the SC field.

3. Be very careful if you try to match a subject heading like “Bible. Corinthians I 11–14” exactly. Punctuation is more flexible when you search than when you browse. Even though, when searching, you can opt to omit the period after Bible, and capitalization does not matter, and extra spaces cause no problems, it is still easy to make a mistake. One easy way to guarantee correct form is to browse or to click a hyperlink in a record. Then you can pick “revise search” to edit as needed. Often you can simply omit “bible” in the heading like this: Corinthians I 11–14. See Fig. 1050.

4. To do a comprehensive Bible passage search, use both the Subject field and the Scripture citation field, linking them with a logical OR as in Figure 1050.

The screenshot shows a search interface with three rows of input fields. The first row contains the text 'corinthians i 11-14' in a text box, followed by 'in' and a dropdown menu set to 'SU Subjects', and a blue 'Search' button. The second row starts with a dropdown menu set to 'or', followed by a text box containing 'corinthians 1st 13', 'in', and a dropdown menu set to 'Select a Field (optional)'. The third row starts with a dropdown menu set to 'and', followed by an empty text box, 'in', and a dropdown menu set to 'Select a Field (optional)'. To the right of the third row is a blue 'Add Row' button.

Figure 1050: Combining Subject and Scripture Citation

Of course this means you must determine what range of chapters is used in the subject field for the specific chapter you need. Browsing is one way to do that.

BOOK REVIEWS IN ATLA

ATLA is a major source for reviews of theological books. Because some reviews use initials instead of author’s first name, and some reviews omit book subtitles, use last name and a few words from the title to search for reviews. Here is a search for Buist Fanning’s *Verbal Aspect in the New Testament*.

The screenshot shows a search interface with three rows of input fields. The first row contains the text 'fanning' in a text box, followed by 'in' and a dropdown menu set to 'AU Author', and a blue 'Search' button. The second row starts with a dropdown menu set to 'and', followed by a text box containing 'verbal aspect', 'in', and a dropdown menu set to 'TI Title'. The third row starts with a dropdown menu set to 'and', followed by an empty text box, 'in', and a dropdown menu set to 'Select a Field (optional)'. To the right of the third row is a blue 'Add Row' button.

Figure 1060: Searching for a book review

“Author” could mean author of the book or author of the review.

ESSAYS IN ATLA

ATLA indexes essays and chapters in festschriften and other multi-author books. Once you have searched ATLA and identified essays of interest, then you must determine if DTS owns the book that contains the essay and obtain the book call number. The author and title of the essay may not be listed in the library catalog. You must search Biblos by name of book editor (not name of essay author) and/or by the title of the book (not title of the essay) to get the book call number.

Title:	<i>Progressive dispensationalism and the law /gospel contrast: a case study in biblical theology</i>
Author(s):	Fuller, Daniel P.
Source:	Biblical theology p 237-249. Downers Grove, Ill. : InterVarsity Pr ; Leicester : Apollos, 2002 View Source Record

Figure 1070: Essay in a book

Title:	Biblical theology: retrospect and prospect
Author(s):	Hafemann, Scott J. (Editor)
Publisher:	Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Pr; Leicester: Apollos, 2002

Figure 1080: Book that contains the essay

USING SPECIAL INDEXES

ATLA includes some special indexes. You should read the online help about these indexes before using them because they can both help and hurt you. For example, there is a classification code assigned to book records that looks something like a subject heading. It appears only on book records so you will retrieve only book records if you use it. That might not be what you expect or want. The special indexes can add precision to your searches. For example, search for “sermon*” by subject and retrieve 12,000 records. About half are sermons and half are articles about sermons. There is also a special subject genre field. Search for sermon* by subject genre and you retrieve only the 6000 sermons. (The general subject category includes both the genre, sermons, and the topic, sermons.) You will almost never need to use these special indexes, but perhaps as much as two percent of the time you could benefit from using them, so it is worth while to read about them after you are familiar with the basic indexes.

FULL-TEXT ARTICLES ONLINE







- [Society without God: what the least religious nations can tell us about contentment](#)
By: McMinn, Lisa Graham. Source: Christianity Today, 53 no 2 F 2009, p 57-58. Publication Type: Review
Database: ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials
 [Add to folder](#)
 [HTML Full Text](#)  [PDF Full Text](#)
- [The moral obligation of reasonable non-believers: a special problem for divine command metaethics](#) 
By: Morrison, Wes. Source: International Journal for Philosophy of Religion, 65 no 1 F 2009, p 1-10. Publication Type: Article
Database: ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials
 [Add to folder](#)
 [Linked Full Text](#)

Figure 1090: Variations in full text links

Some of the articles are available online. If an article is available online as part of the database you are searching and is stored at the EBSCO website, then there is a clickable link that says “PDF Full Text” or “HTML Full Text.” HTML documents usually lack page numbers and usually convert footnotes to

endnotes. Bad. Use pdf. It preserves page numbers, footnotes, exotic fonts, charts, etc. If the link says “Linked Full Text,” that means the article is available online from another EBSCO database or from an ejournal we subscribe to through EBSCO. It could be pdf or html.

If some of the articles in the journal are available online but stored at a publisher’s site or some other non-EBSCO location, then there is a clickable link that says “Check Full Text.” That means the article may be available online if you click the link. Some articles in that journal are available online, and this may be one of them. The link will take you via an openURL resolver to a listing of what is available and where. When you follow that link, you may have to search again for the specific article in another database. So you need to know the author and title and journal volume and year. It is hard to remember all that. So when you follow the “Check full text” link, it is wise to right click the link and pick “Open in a New Tab”. That way ATLA is in one tab of your browser and the new window in another. You can read rather than remember the citation.

You may be tempted to limit your searches to articles available online. Don’t do this! Some ATLA articles are available full text online but most are not available online. Of the articles that are available online, some are stored at the EBSCO website, some are stored at a publisher website, and still others elsewhere. The difference is very important. When you limit a search to full text, you will match only articles stored at the EBSCO website. So this option delivers less than you would expect.

TRANSFERRING RECORDS TO ZOTERO

It is possible to export records from ATLA and import them into Zotero bibliographic management software. (See <http://library.dts.edu/Pages/RM/Write/zotero.pdf> for a general overview of using Zotero.)

Method 1: Search ATLA (step 1). Click the folder icon at the end of the URL (step 2).

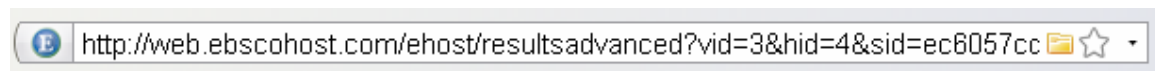


Figure 1100: URL with folder icon

Choose the citations you want to import into Zotero from the list that comes up (step 3).

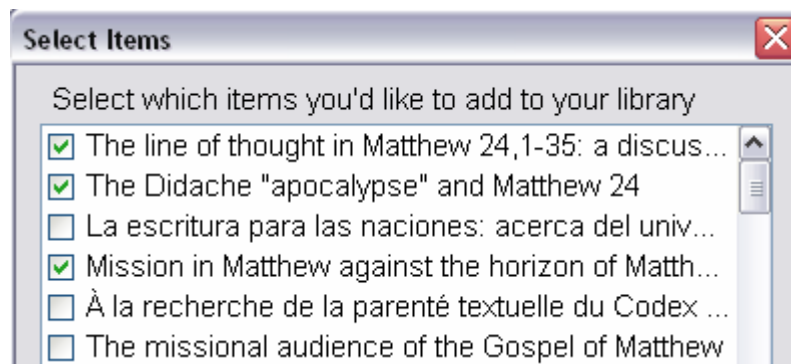


Figure 1110: List of citations

Click OK to add the citations to your Zotero library (step 4).

Method 2: Search ATLA (step 1). Click “Add to folder” for each citation you wish to keep (step 2). Click “Folder View” at the right. Select the citations you want again from the new list (step 3). Click the Export icon, choose “Citations in BibTeX format,” and click Save (step 4). In your browser, go to File→ Save as, and save the page as a .txt file (step 5). Open Zotero, click the Actions (gear) icon, and choose Import. Choose the file you just saved and click open (step 6). Zotero will import the citations.