



Divine Revelation, Part II: Scripture and Tradition

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The Three Types of Revelation

- **Natural Revelation**

- The reflection of God in the created world.

- **Scripture**

- The prophetic revelation of God through the recorded history of Israel, the gospel summaries of the life of Jesus, and the apostolic writings.

- **Tradition**

- The continuing faithful transmission of the living Word of God through the Church.

The Logos and the Spirit

- There three Persons of the Trinity share **one undivided Substance and one undivided Will**.
- The Father eternally begets the Son, His perfect Image, **the Logos (Word)** by whom Creation was spoken into being (John 1:1-3).
- The Holy Spirit is the **Breath of God** exchanged between the Father and the Son. He is the **Divine Wind** carrying creation from its origin to its ultimate destination (John 3:8).

The Wounded Word

- All human history prior to the Incarnation was preparation for the Word made flesh (John 1:10-14; Heb 1:1-2). This history is summarized in the Old Testament.
- Jesus assumed a human nature and was wounded by men. His wounds were preserved and transformed in His glorious body after He rose from the dead (John 20:25-27).
- The Gospels are the life of Christ transmitted through human means, mirroring the Incarnation.
- The New Testament includes the revelation of Jesus' mystical body, the Church (birth, death, resurrection).
- Limitations of human transmission of the Word through Scripture are like the glorified wounds of Christ. They point to a deeper reality: "God draws straight with crooked lines."

The Inspiration of Scripture

- Scripture is God-breathed through the Holy Spirit, the Breath of God.
- Human authors exercised their natural abilities under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- The Scriptures cannot be judged by modern criteria. They were suited to the times, places, and cultures in which they were written.
- Scripture is addressed to the entire human race. Understanding of its message in depth may develop progressively until the end of time.

The Inerrancy of Scripture

- Inerrancy refers to the infallible nature of biblical truth **as God intended it to be understood.**
- The teaching of the Second Vatican Council:
 - “Therefore, since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error **that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of salvation.**” *Dei Verbum*

The *Sensus Plenior* of Scripture

- Difficulties in Scripture other than copyist errors may refer to a higher level of meaning or “fuller sense” (*sensus plenior*).
- The teaching of Pope Leo XIII:
 - “For the language of the Bible is employed to express ... many things which are beyond the power and scope of the reason of man—that is to say, divine mysteries and all that is related to them. There is sometimes... a fullness and hidden depth of meaning which the letter hardly expresses and which the laws of interpretation hardly warrant.” *Providentissimus Deus*

The *Quadraga* (Four Senses) of Scripture

- **The Literal Sense**
 - Conveyed by the words of Scripture and discovered by exegesis, following the rules of sound interpretation: “All other senses of Sacred Scripture are based on the literal.” CCC 116
- **The Allegorical Sense**
 - We can acquire a more profound understanding of events by recognizing their significance in Christ. CCC 117
- **The Moral Sense**
 - The events reported in Scripture ought to lead us to act justly. As St. Paul says, they were written “for our instruction.” CCC 117
- **The Anagogical Sense**
 - We can view realities and events in terms of their eternal significance, leading us toward our true homeland. CCC 117

The Unity of Scripture

- The teaching of St. Augustine:
 - “The New Testament is hidden in the Old, and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New.” *Questions on the Heptateuch* 2.73
- Biblical typology refers to the foreshadowing of Christian truth in the Old Testament.
 - The sacrifice of Isaac anticipates the Crucifixion.
 - The crossing of the Red Sea prefigures Baptism.
 - The swallowing of Jonah by the whale for three days foreshadows the Resurrection.

The Canon of Scripture

- The early Church relied on the Old Testament and the oral witness of the apostles.
- A formal Christian canon of Scripture evolved over time with much controversy over certain books (e.g., the Apocalypse).
- The canon was defined by Pope St. Damasus I in 382 AD as a result of the Council of Rome.
- The canon of Damasus was repeatedly affirmed by various Church councils until the Council of Trent (1545-1563) formally closed the canon.

The Old Testament

- Jewish division of Hebrew Scriptures (TaNaK):
 - **Torah** (Law): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy (Greek: Pentateuch = 5 Books)
 - **Nevi'im** (Prophets): Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings (Former Prophets), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Twelve (Latter Prophets)
 - **Ketuvim** (Writings): Ruth, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Lamentations, Daniel, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
- The Catholic Church added 7 “deuterocanonical” books (Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Baruch, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach) for a total of 46 books. Martin Luther took these out of the Protestant Bible.

The New Testament

- There are 27 books in the New Testament.
 - The Four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
 - Acts of the Apostles (Luke, Part 2)
 - Letters of St. Paul (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews)
 - The Catholic Epistles (James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude)
 - The Revelation to John (Apocalypse)
- These books were chosen because they were written by the Apostles or by their close associates.
- Other books were rejected as heretical Gnostic writings or of dubious apostolicity.

Inspired Translations

- The **Septuagint** (132 BC) was the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Koine Greek commissioned by Ptolemy II in Alexandria, Egypt. It included the Deuterocanonical Books, and is often quoted in the Greek New Testament.
- The **Vulgate** (405 AD) is the Latin translation of the Bible made by St. Jerome, and is the official version of the Roman Catholic Church.
- Both of these versions are inspired even when they deviate from the literal meaning of the Hebrew text (e.g., Ps 40:6 as quoted in Heb 10:5).

English Translations

- **King James Version (1611)**: Protestant version based on Masoretic Text (Hebrew OT) and *Textus Receptus* (Greek NT of Erasmus).
- **Douay-Rheims (1582)** and Challoner revision (1752): Catholic version based on Vulgate.
- **Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition (1966)**: Based on Masoretic Text and Nestle-Aland Greek NT.
- **Jerusalem Bible (1966)**: Influenced by French translation of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts.
- **New American Bible (1970)**, Revised Edition (2011): USCCB version for liturgical use.

Sacred Tradition

- The Bible began as oral tradition before it was written.
 - “He who hears you hears me (Lk 10:16).”
 - “Stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by **word of mouth** or by letter (2 Thess 2:15).”
- Sources of Sacred Tradition include the following:
 - The Creeds (Symbol of the Apostles, Nicene Creed)
 - The consensus of the Church Fathers
 - The Liturgy (e.g., the Roman Missal)
 - The Magisterium (papal, episcopal, and conciliar authority)
 - Archeological relics (e.g., the Catacombs)
- Without Sacred Tradition (councils, papacy), there would be no canon of Scripture or divine guarantee of its proper interpretation (Mt 28:20).

Authority of Tradition

- “I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all truth (John 16:12-13).”
- Tradition transmits in its entirety the word of God which has been entrusted to the Apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit... Hence both **Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal feelings of devotion and reverence.**” *Dei Verbum*
- “It was done by the apostles who handed on, by the spoken word of their preaching, by the example they gave, by the institutions they established, what they themselves had received—whether from the lips of Christ, from His way of life or His works, or whether they had learned it by the prompting of the Holy Spirit.” *Dei Verbum*

Scripture and Tradition

- “The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of tradition, has been entrusted to the living, teaching office of the Church alone.” CCC 85.
- The Church only infrequently defines the meaning of specific verses of Scripture (e.g., references to Baptism and the Eucharist).
- The Liturgy is full of references to Scripture.
- The laity are encouraged to read, study, and pray with Scripture in imitation of the Saints, the ones who best understood Scripture.

Erroneous Interpretations

- Fundamentalism takes a literalistic approach based on popular understanding.
- Modernism sees Scripture as the fallible product of time- and culture-bound human authors. It seeks to demythologize Scripture based on the scientific method.
- Both these errors deny God's perfection:
 - “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts (Is 55:9).”

Modern Biblical Criticism

- The Catholic Church did not begin serious modern biblical scholarship until 1943.
- Pope Pius XII's encyclical, *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (Inspired by the Holy Spirit):
 - called for new translations of the Bible from the original languages;
 - encouraged the study of the text of Scripture and its transmission (textual or lower criticism);
 - permitted the use of higher criticism.

Types of Higher Criticism

- **Form Criticism**
 - Examines the literary forms (e.g., saga, lament, letter, poem, wedding song) used in the Bible.
- **Historical/Literary Criticism**
 - Studies the origin, development, and aims of the literary elements of the Bible.
- **Redaction Criticism**
 - Attempts to understand the process of editing used in compiling the Bible.
- **Source Criticism**
 - Distinguishes the various sources for the current version of the Bible.

Examples of Higher Criticism of the Book of Genesis

- Documentary Hypothesis: There are two creation stories from two distinct sources marked by their name for God: a) Gen 1:1 – 2:4 (Elohism), and b) Gen 2:5–25 (Yahwism).
- The first creation story has some resemblance to the Babylonian creation myth, *Enuma Elish*.
- Much of Genesis is in the form of tribal and family history, such as genealogies.
- A Levitical priest concerned with ritual holiness may have edited various details of Genesis.