

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE BIBLE



Sacred Scripture: Old and New Testament

“In His gracious goodness, God has seen to it that what He had revealed for the salvation of all nations would abide perpetually in its full integrity and be handed on to all generations. Therefore, Christ the Lord in whom the full revelation of the supreme God is brought to completion (see Cor. 1:20; 3:13; 4:6), commissioned the Apostles to preach to all men that Gospel which is the source of all saving truth and moral teaching, and to impart to them heavenly gifts. . . This commission was faithfully fulfilled by the Apostles who, by their oral preaching, by example, and by observances handed on what they had received from the lips of Christ, from living with Him, and from what He did, or what they had learned through the prompting of the Holy Spirit. The commission was fulfilled, too, by those Apostles and apostolic men who under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit committed the message of salvation to writing.”¹

The Old Testament (OT)

- The OT was written in Hebrew. The text had no vowels, spaces or punctuations originally. It was literally “one word.” One had to be taught what the text actually said and how to pronounce the words since there were no vowels.
- The **Masoretic Text** is a version of the original Hebrew bible that added vowels and spaces to the text. These first manuscripts (MSS) were created between the 7th and 10th centuries A.D. These manuscripts are used to translate the Hebrew text to modern languages today.
- There exist older Hebrew texts than the Masoretic text, such as the scrolls found in the caves of Qumran (also called the Dead Sea scrolls). They were discovered around the site known as Wadi Qumran near the Dead Sea **between 1946 and 1956** by Bedouin shepherds.
- The books of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) and Tobit written in Hebrew were found at Qumran. This is important in the discussion of the canon (official list) of the OT.
- The OT is broken up into the following literary forms:
 - The **Law**: The Torah (Hebrew for “Law”) – first 5 books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). Also, called the Pentateuch.
 - The **Prophets** were subdivided by the Jews into the *Former Prophets* [Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel (I and II Kings), and 1 and 2 Kings (III and IV Kings)] and the *Latter Prophets* (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor Prophets, counted by the Hebrews as one book).
 - The **Writings** embrace all the remaining books of the Hebrew Bible. These are: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Canticle of Canticles (Song of Songs), Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra (Esdras), Nehemiah (II Esdras) and Chronicles (Paralipomenon).
- The OT was oriented such that it would prepare the way for the coming of Christ (CCC 122).
- In it, the mystery of our salvation is hidden (DV 15) in that God, Himself, would come to save us.

Notes: _____

The Canon of the Old Testament (OT)

- Tradition holds that Moses wrote down the Pentateuch in about 1300 B.C. He did not invent the books, he merely wrote down the existing tradition and added what he experienced.
- Books continued to be written and added to the OT “canon,” or “official list,” until about 100 B.C. ending with the 2 books of Maccabees.
- By the time the Greek empire had come into power, the Israelites of the diaspora (see definition) had lost their native Hebrew tongue. As a result, a translation of the Hebrew OT into Greek was

¹ Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation: Dei Verbum, 7. (DV). In *Vatican II Documents*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

written around 280 B.C. for the Alexandrian (Hellenist) Jews. It is called the *Septuagint* (Latin for “Seventy” – abbreviated as “LXX”).

- This Greek Alexandrian canon of the OT (46 books) was the most commonly used at the time of Christ and the Apostles. This is OT canon that the Catholic Church uses.
 - To support the case that this version of the OT was authoritative, scholars have analyzed the OT scriptures and determined that of the approximately 373 OT quotes in the NT, about 340 are from the Greek Septuagint (LXX) (Alexandrian OT canon).
 - This demonstrates that Jesus and the New Testament (NT) writers regarded the Greek Septuagint (LXX) as authoritative. Recall that this version of the OT had 46 books that included the 7 books the Protestant bible leaves out.

Why the difference of 7 books in the OT?

- The closing of the Jewish canon has been a hotly debated issue. There is at this time no consensus of the date in which the OT canon was closed. It is thought by some scholars that it was sometime during the first century A.D. Regardless of the timing, the Jewish canon was determined to only contain 39 sacred books. This canon excluded seven books from the Septuagint accepted by Jews at the time of Jesus.
- Some Jews, such as those from Ethiopia, follow a canon identical to the Catholic Old Testament and includes the seven books.²
 - The Jewish canon was limited to 39 books, because at the time the canon was to be closed in the 1st century A.D., they were only able to find Hebrew scrolls for 39 of the 46 books. Those without Hebrew sources were left out of the Jewish canon.
 - 16th century Protestants favored the Jewish canon, which left out 7 books that are as follows: Judith, Tobit, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus (Sirach), Baruch and 1, 2 Maccabees. and parts of Daniel and Ester. (I use a mnemonic device to remember the list: ***JT Web and the 2 McCabes***)
 - Beginning in the 16th century, theologians began to refer to the OT as *protocanonical* and *deuterocanonical*. Partly because of the Protestant Reformation.
 - The **protocanonical** (Gk. *protos*, “first”) books correspond with those of the canon of the Jews, and the Old Testament as received by Protestants.
 - The **deuterocanonical** (Gk. *deuteros*, “second”) books correspond to the 7 books not included in the Jewish canon. These books are classified by Protestants as the “Apocrypha,” which carries the connotation of being “false” books. The word actually means “hidden.”

Notes: _____

The New Testament (NT)

- The NT was written in Koine Greek (Hellenistic Greek). Some scholars believe Matthew was first written in Aramaic then translated to Greek.
- The NT was historically preserved as three main text families: The **Byzantine** (Eastern, Syrian, Textus Receptus, Majority text), the **Alexandrian** (Egypt, Codex Vaticanus, Codex Sinaiticus) and the **Western** manuscripts.
- The Byzantine family consists of about 85% or more of all recovered manuscripts (approx. 5800) and they were mostly discovered around the areas of Paul’s missionary journeys. The oldest of these manuscripts date back to about 500 A.D. and completely dominated the next 1000 years or more.

² Encyclopedia Judaica, vol. 6, p. 1147.

- The most important Alexandrian manuscript is the *Codex Vaticanus* that dates back to about 300 A.D. and it contains the whole NT. It also contains the complete Old Testament Septuagint (LXX) and resides in the Vatican library.
- The *Codex Sinaiticus* was re-discovered during the 19th century in a Greek Orthodox monastery (Mount-Sinai). These manuscripts are older than the Byzantine manuscripts and also contained the entire LXX.
- Many of the early Protestant translations are from the Greek *Textus Receptus* (TR) or “received text” in Latin (e.g. King James Version). Catholic bibles are generally translated from the Alexandrian MSS. Regardless of which Greek text is used, these 2 agree for more than 96% of the NT text.³ There are no differences that demonstrate opposing doctrines.
- Additions to the Textus Receptus include the ending of the “Our Father” in Matthew 6:13ff
 - “For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen”
 - and the “Johannine Gloss or Comma” at the end of 1 Jn 5:7 (aka ‘The Three Witnesses’)
 - “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these Three are One. And there are three that bear witness. . .”
- These additions are not to be found in any ancient manuscripts prior to the 5th century.
- The early Church knew only the OT as scripture (Gk. *graphē*, see 2 Tim 3:14-16). The word for “bible” (Gk. *biblos*) means “book”.
- The first NT “book” written was a letter from Paul to the Thessalonians in about 51 A.D. and the last book, Revelations, around 68 A.D. (depending on the scholar, some say as late as 90 A.D.). Scholars debate the order and dates in which they were written, but almost none say the first book was written before 45 A.D.
- As the Apostles started to die, the Church saw it necessary to preserve their teachings. It preserved the epistles of Paul, which were letters to various churches addressing problems and questions in their communities. The Gospels were written between 50 to 60 A.D.
- There was no printed bible (NT or OT) for 1500 years. The Bible was hand copied up until the mid-15th century, mostly in monasteries. It was Catholic scribes and monks that preserved the Bible over the centuries.
- The first bible printed was the Latin Vulgate of the Catholic Church around 1454 A.D. by the German, Johannes Gutenberg. Johannes was Catholic.
- Jesus never told his Apostles to write down what he taught. Jesus, as far as we know, did not write anything.

Notes: _____

The Canon of the NT

- The New Testament canon is a result of development and not was not clear-cut from the beginning.
 - For 300 years, the books of the Bible were not to be found together in one volume.
 - There were 3 classes into which the Christian writings were divided.
 - The ‘**acknowledged**’ or canonical books: modern list minus the disputed books.
 - The **disputed** books: James, Jude, 2Peter, 2&3 John, Hebrews & Revelation, Shepherd of Hermas, Epistle of Barnabas, Didache
 - The **apocryphal** or ‘false’ books: Gospel of James, Thomas, etc. Acts of Peter, Paul, and many others.
 - The NT canon was finally determined and confirmed by Catholic bishops at the following councils and consisted of only **27 books**:

³ Wallace, D. B. (2016). [Textual Criticism of the New Testament](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

- Synod of Rome in 382 A.D. – presided by **Pope Damasus**
- Councils of Hippo (393 A.D.) and Carthage (397 A.D.) – presided by St. Augustine. This canon was ratified by **Pope Innocent I** in 405 A.D. The content was now fixed and discussion was closed.
- Interesting note is that the OT canon was also decided at these councils without dispute. It contained the same list of 46 books that the Catholic Church has today.
- The Council of Trent infallibly defined the canon in 1546 A.D., because Martin Luther removed the books of Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation from the NT canon during the Protestant Reformation (1517 A.D.).
- Where are the original documents of the NT?
 - Persecutors of the Church in the first 300 years destroyed everything that was Christian.
 - In the early years, it was written on papyrus, which is frail to begin with.
 - In the first century, copies were made of the inspired writings, so the originals were not necessarily preserved.
 - Critics may use the lack of originals to discredit Christianity, but the NT copies are closer to the events they describe than any other ancient writing we have.
 - **Herodotus** (Greco-Persian Wars) lived in 400 BC, yet we only have few copies of his manuscripts dating back only to the 10th century AD.
 - **Thucydides** (History of Peloponnesian War) lived in 400 BC and we only have a few manuscripts dating back to the 11th century AD.

Understanding the Bible

The bible is not:

- A scientific document to explain biology, mathematics, physics or creation
- A collection of ALL doctrine to be believed (see Jn 21:25)
- The definitive word on all subjects (e.g. How do we get married? What is the expected form of worship?)

The Bible is:

- Inspired by the Holy Spirit
- Inerrant / Infallible
- Personal – written by a Father to His children

The Word of God (CCC 80-81, 85)

- It is both oral (Sacred Tradition) and written (Sacred Scripture) tradition . . . see **2 Thes 2:15**.

Notes: _____

A. Inspiration of Scripture

- God is the author of Scripture and written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is therefore, rightly called The Word of God. (CCC 105)
- The Holy Spirit inspired the human authors to compose the sacred books while the writers still maintained their own faculties and powers so that they wrote whatever God wanted them to write and no more. The inspired books teach the truth, faithfully, without error. (CCC 106 – 107)
- The Christian Church is not a “religion of the book.” It is the religion of the Word of God.
- The Church venerates the Scriptures as she venerates the body of the Lord (Dei Verbum (DV), 21)
- In the Scriptures, our Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children and speak with them. (DV, 21)

- The Sacred Scriptures, inspired by the Holy Spirit, are without error and teach the truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to them. (DV, 11)
- St. Jerome stated, “Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ”.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) on the Scriptures:

105 *God is the author of Sacred Scripture.* “The divinely revealed realities, which are contained and presented in the text of Sacred Scripture, have been written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit . . . they have God as their author, and have been handed on as such to the Church herself.”

106 God inspired the human authors of the sacred books. “To compose the sacred books, God chose certain men who, all the while he employed them in this task, made full use of their own faculties and powers so that, though he acted in them and by them, it was as true authors that they consigned to writing whatever he wanted written, and no more.”

107 The inspired books teach the truth . . . we must acknowledge that the books of Scripture firmly, faithfully, and without error teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the Sacred Scriptures.”

B. Inerrancy of Scripture - *Providentissimus Deus, Pope Leo XIII, 1893*

- “It is absolutely wrong and forbidden either to narrow inspiration to certain parts only of Holy Scripture or to admit that the sacred writer has erred.”
- “It follows that those who maintain that an error is possible in any genuine passage of the sacred writings either pervert the Catholic notion of inspiration or make God the author of such error.”
- St. Augustine writing to St. Jerome: “On my own part I confess . . . that it is only to those books of Scripture which are now called canonical that I have learned to pay such honor and reverence as to believe most firmly that none of their writers has fallen into any error. And if in these books I meet anything which seems contrary to truth I shall not hesitate to conclude that the text is faulty [copyist error] or that the translator has not expressed the meaning of the passage, or that I myself do not understand.”

Understanding the senses of Scripture

- We are to read the OT in the light of Christ crucified and risen and the NT. St. Augustine once said that the NT lies hidden in the Old and the OT is unveiled in the New. (CCC 129)

Notes: _____

The 2 Senses of Scripture: The Literal and the Spiritual

Literal Sense (Literal vs. Literalist)

A. **Literal** Interpretation

- CCC #116 The *literal sense* is the meaning 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.”
- Literal interpretation of scripture takes into account the meaning that the author intended to convey.
 - Example: “It’s raining cats & dogs.” Meaning: It’s raining hard.

B. **Literalist** Interpretation...Condemned by the Catholic Church

- Literalist interpretation takes the exact meaning of the words without consideration of popular cultural meaning or the meaning that the author intended to convey.

- Example: “It's raining cats & dogs.” Meaning: Cats & dogs are falling from the sky.
- Creationist – Universe created in 6 literal 24-hour days

Spiritual Sense (CCC 117)

1. Allegorical Sense – How does it apply to Christ?
 - Crossing the Red Sea; with 1 Corinthians 10:1-2
 - Abraham & Isaac; with God's sacrifice of His son, Christ.
2. Moral Sense – How do we apply scripture in our daily walk with Christ?
 - 10 Commandments, moral commandments (Gal 5:19-21; 1Cor 6:9-10)
3. Anagogical Sense – How does it apply to our eternal destiny?
 - Judge not, lest ye be judged (Matthew 7:1)

Understanding the Bible in Light of *Salvation History* – God’s Divine Plan

- Salvation history is God’s plan for his mankind through the OT and culminating in Jesus Christ.
- God’s original design was for communion with Him (Adam and Eve).
- Man’s sin caused a separation between God and His creation.
- Many “types” of Christ were sent to bring His children back to Him (Noah, Abraham, Moses, David).
- God established 6 covenants with His people to show them that He is faithful, that He loves them and that He wants them to be His people.

#1 Adam & Eve (Couple)	#2 Noah (Family)
#3 Abraham (Tribe)	#4 Moses (Nation)
#5 David (Kingdom)	#6 Jesus (Universal Church)

- The first 5 covenant “types” were stages that culminated in the final covenant: The sending of his only begotten Son, Jesus, to reconcile the world to Himself. This 6th and final covenant accomplishes God’s plan of salvation for His children through Jesus Christ and His Church.

Understanding the Bible in Light of *Typology*

- The “types” in the OT pointed to something greater than them. They pointed to a fulfillment of what they represented.
- They are “figures of the true” (*Heb 9:24*); “shadows of the good things to come” (*Heb 10:1 ff*); “this (Noah saved by water in the Ark) prefigured baptism” (*1 Pt 3:21*)
- The type is always inferior to the reality it prefigures. (Adam & Jesus, Temple & Jesus, Eve & Mary, Passover & Last Supper)

Example 1: Ark of the New Covenant – A type of Mary

Revelation 11:19-12:1

“Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the **ark** of his covenant was seen within his temple . . . there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a **woman** clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.”

Notes: _____

<p>The Ark contained the 3 items (Heb 9:4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Manna</u> - bread from heaven; gave life to the Israelites in the desert. (<i>Ex 16:4</i>) 	<p>Mary’s womb contained the following 3 items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Jesus</u> - The bread come down from heaven (Jn 6) and The bread of life (<i>Jn 6:48</i>)
---	--

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>The 10 Commandments</u> - The Word of God (<i>Ex 20:1 ff</i>) • <u>Aaron's staff/rod</u> - High priest (<i>Ex 7:9-12</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Jesus</u> - The Word of God (<i>Jn 1:14</i>) • <u>Jesus</u> - Our High Priest (<i>Heb 3:1</i>)
<p>The Ark was “overshadowed” by the “Cloud”. (<i>Ex 40:34</i> see LXX)</p> <p>The Ark traveled through the “hill country” (<i>2 Sam 6:3</i>)</p> <p>David said, “how can the Ark of the Lord come to me?” (<i>2 Sam 6:9</i>)</p> <p>The Ark was with Obed Edom for 3 months (<i>2 Sam 6:11</i>)</p> <p>David “leaped” before the Ark (<i>2 Sam 6:16</i>) And David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with <u>joy</u>. (<i>2 Sam. 6:12</i>)</p> <p>David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of Jehovah with <u>shouting</u>, and with the sound of the trumpet. (<i>2 Sam. 6:15</i>)</p> <p>The Ark was holy and pure. Uzzah was struck dead because he touched it. (<i>1Chr 13:10; 2 Sam 6:6</i>)</p>	<p>Mary was “overshadowed” by the Holy Spirit. (<i>Lk 1:35</i>)</p> <p>Mary traveled through the “hill country” to Elizabeth’s house (<i>Lk 1:39</i>)</p> <p>Elizabeth said, “who am I that the mother of my lord should come to me.” (<i>Lk 1:43</i>)</p> <p>Mary was with Elizabeth for 3 months (<i>Lk 1:56</i>)</p> <p>John the Baptist “leaped” at hearing Mary’s voice (<i>Lk 1:41</i>) And my spirit hath <u>rejoiced</u> in God my Savior. (<i>Luke 1:47</i>)</p> <p>and she (Elizabeth) lifted up her voice with a <u>loud cry</u> (<i>Luke 1:42</i>)</p> <p>Mary was holy and pure - she was “full of grace” and “blessed among all women.” (<i>Lk 1:28; Lk 1:48</i>)</p>

Example 2: Abraham and Isaac – A type of God the Father and Jesus

- Abraham was to offer Isaac “his only son” as a sacrifice to God on Mount Moriah. (*Gen 22:2*)
- Isaac carried the wood for the sacrifice on his back up the mountain (Mt. Moriah). (*Gen 22:6*)
- Isaac asked where was the sacrifice and Abraham said “God will provide” (Heb. *Yahweh Jireh*) (*Gen 22:8*) – This place is later called Salem and eventually becomes *Jireh-Salem* or *Jerusalem*.
- Jesus was the Father’s only begotten son offered as a sacrifice
- Jesus carried the wood to Mount Cavalry, one of the 7 hills close to Mount Moriah (*2 Chr 3:1* – the Temple was on Mt. Moriah)
- Jesus was the sacrifice that God provided. (*Eph 5:2*)

Example 3: Passover (Exodus 12) and The Last Supper (Matthew 26:26 - the Eucharist)

- The shedding of the lamb’s blood and putting on wooden door posts saves us – Christ’s sacrifice on the cross saves us, because Jesus is the Lamb of God (*John 1:29*)
- The lamb was to be spotless – a prefiguring of Jesus being sinless
- Had to eat the Passover lamb to be saved – we must also eat the Passover Lamb – Jesus in the Eucharist to be saved (*Jn 6:53-54*)

Notes: _____