

Sacred Scripture

And he said to them, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He appeared to be going further, but they constrained him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?" ~ Luke 24:25-32

SACRED SCRIPTURE OR THE BIBLE is the privileged expression of God's Word. It is unique because it, being written under the inspiration and direction of the Holy Spirit, has God as its author. In it, the story of salvation unfolds through God's saving actions and words. Furthermore, because Scripture is the Word of God, it is the most perfect source of encouragement and guidance. In it, God the Father comes to meet his children, talks with them and provides for them, as the Psalmist says, a lamp to their feet and a light for their path (see Ps 119:105).

Important Facts about Sacred Scripture

Divine Authorship — God is the principal author of Sacred Scripture, the Bible. He inspired the human authors (for example, Moses, Isaiah, David, Matthew, John, and Paul), who made full use of their own faculties and powers to write what he wanted. The human authors wrote according to their own various times and cultures, literary styles, and modes of expression. Nevertheless, all that the inspired writers attest must be regarded as intended by the Holy Spirit. St. Augustine, a great teacher and Scripture scholar of the fourth century, wrote: "You recall that one and the same Word of God extends throughout Scripture, that it is one and the same Utterance that resounds in the mouths of all the sacred writers"¹ (CCC 102).

No Errors — The Sacred Scriptures teach the truth faithfully and without error. God cannot make a mistake, nor can he lie. His Word to us is his Revelation, which he intends for us to know

"God is the principal author of the Bible."



*Jesus teaching two disciples on the road to Emmaus,
by Domenico Mastroianni, 1876-1962*

for our salvation. In his loving goodness, he reveals the mystery of his will: *by his Word, the incarnate Son of God, Jesus, we can have access to the Father and participate in the divine nature. He intends that we share in Trinitarian life now and forever in Heaven.* The Bible is the Word of God. It is wisdom from on high. We must be attentive to it, believe it, and obey it.

There are passages in the Bible that seem to contradict each other, but many times what appears to be a contradiction is worked out when one interprets the passages in their proper context.

¹ St. Augustine, En. in Ps. 103, 4, 1 from J.P. Migne, ed., Patrologia Latina 37, 1378 (Paris: 1841-1855); cf. Psalms 104; John 1:1

The Church has always taught that the Bible is free from error because it has been inspired by God. God being the source of all truth could not author anything that contained errors.

However, this does not mean that we can read everything in the Bible as literally true. The Bible is a collection of many different kinds of writings. When reading the Bible we should be careful not to interpret one kind of writing as if it were another, but to interpret each part according to the intention of its human author. The account of creation in the book of Genesis is not intended as a manual of physics. The book of Songs is a long love poem, not to be read as a historical narrative. The book of Job is a drama, not to be read as a description of a factual event. Different kinds of writings will have different kinds of meanings, sometimes literal, sometimes spiritual, and many times both. Most of the time it will be fairly obvious what the author is trying to convey and, with a little common sense and careful reading, the meaning and truth intended will come to light. If problems still persist, commentaries are usually helpful in explaining apparent errors or historical mistakes.

Interpretation of God's Word — The third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, inspired all of Revelation. Sacred Scripture can only be properly understood in light of him and his intention in revealing. The plan of God, his intention, and his mode of operation are one entity. Attention must be paid to the unity of his Revelation: *"And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, be interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.... Then he said to them, 'These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled'"* (Lk 24:27, 44).

The Bible must also be read in "the living Tradition of the whole Church." The deposit of faith, all that Jesus commanded, taught and did, was given to the apostles and disciples (see Mt 28:18-20; Jn 20:30; Jn 21:25). They held it to their hearts to guard it (see 1

Tm 6:20), and they could not be restrained from virtually "shouting it from the housetops" (see Acts 1:8; Acts 2:14-36; Acts 4:1-20). That whole deposit, the "living Tradition" of the Church, has been carefully passed down and guarded by the successors of St. Peter, who was given the authority of the keys of the Kingdom (see Mt 16:18-19). Sacred Scripture came from that "living Tradition." It was the successors of Peter and the apostles, the pope and bishops in union with him, who authorized the canon of Scripture. Still today, the pope and bishops are the final authority and guardians of the whole deposit of faith (the living Tradition) and the Sacred Scripture.

No truth of Revelation can be in contradiction to other truths of Revelation. When interpreting Scripture, the

reader should keep in mind the unity and coherence that exists in and between all the truths of the faith as taught and transmitted by the Church. A major test for the authenticity of Revelation is the consistent coherence between Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture.

Each person approaches Scripture from individual experience and perspective. These factors often influence personal interpretation of it. Everyone who is honestly seeking the truth and personal direction in the Scriptures can find them, if that search is done in faith and in the light of the continual teaching of the Church. Misinterpretation of Scripture can result in loss of the primary meaning of God's Word and in selective acceptance of the truths contained there. Nevertheless, the Church strongly encourages everyone to read the Word of God for private devotion, to memorize it, and to study it diligently. It is *"inspired by God and profitable ... that the man of God may be complete"* (2 Tm 3:16-17).

The Old Testament and the New Testament

The word "testament" explicitly contains the notion of witness. In fact, the Bible is a book of witness accounts of real people whom God inspired to write about events, their experiences, the prophetic insights and words he was giving them. The apostle John speaks eloquently of

"The Bible is free from error because it has been inspired by God."

The Word of God is proclaimed at every Mass, not only on Sunday, but also every day of the week

DAVID CHARLES PHOTOGRAPHY

his role as a writer of the sacred page in his first letter (see 1 Jn 1:1-4). The Old Testament contains the accounts of the successive covenants that God made with the People of Israel, his Chosen People. Each covenant (with Noah, with Abraham, with Moses, and with David for example), was in fact the establishment of God's family, his intention from the first days of his creation of men and women. In every covenant God himself promised to provide for them, to be a Father to them.

To Abraham God said: *"Look toward Heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.... So shall your descendants be.... To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates"* (Gn 15:5, 18). To Moses God said: *"I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment, and I will take you for my people, and I will be your God.... And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham"* (Ex 6:6-8). To David God said: *"I will appoint a place for my people Israel, ... and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house [i.e., a family], ... I will raise up your offspring after you, ... and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father and he shall be my son"* (2 Sm 7:10-14).

In every instance of divine Revelation, God made his intention clearer and more complete. Even so, with the advent of the New Testament at Jesus' coming (see Jer 31:31-34; Mt 26:26-28; Mk 14:24; Lk 1:72; Heb 8:6-13), the Chosen People still did not recognize him as the Promised One of the Old Testament. Jesus fulfilled all of the promises of the Old Testament more deeply than anyone could have imagined. In addition, he established the Church as his people on earth, God's people, a Kingdom of priests whose mission it is to bring the Good News of God's plan to all men and women everywhere and for all time.

Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God's sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy



Stained glass window of St. John the Evangelist

priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.... But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy (1 Pt 2:45, 9-10).

In fact, the New Testament is best understood in light of the Old Testament. It was St. Augustine who said that the New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New. God is one and his Revelation is one and his plan is one; he cannot be divided and neither

can his Testaments. However, the New Covenant does fulfill the Old. It supersedes the Old. There will be no new covenants. Jesus has come, has redeemed us, has sent his Holy Spirit, and we await his final coming to complete his original purpose to draw us back to God the Father.

Sacred Scripture in Catholic Life Today

The "study of the sacred page" is not optional. God's Word must be heeded. It has always been the case that the Catholic Church has venerated the Bible "as she venerates the Lord's Body" (CCC 103). The "wonderful works of God" began with creation and are carried on today in the sacramental life of the Church (see 2 Pt 1:3-4). Receiving the sacraments worthily and studying God's Word are the foundation of Catholic spiritual life. Just as God "walked with Adam and Eve" in the Garden of Eden, he also wants a relationship with us, a dialogue. Therefore, reading and studying the Bible should always be rooted in prayer, especially meditation. *"Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path"* (Ps 119:105).

The Liturgy of the Word

The first half of the Catholic worship service, the Mass, is the proclamation of the Scriptures. This is called the Liturgy of the Word. It is God speaking

to us and it is our response to him. The Word is absolutely essential to this process; it is light on the journey and food for the way. At Mass,

"This does not mean that we can read everything in the Bible as literally true."

the first reading is taken from the books of the Old Testament, except during the weeks after Easter. In general, these Scriptures relate how God acted in the past with his Chosen People, Israel.

A responsorial Psalm follows. The Psalms were originally composed as prayers. (They are generally attributed to King David.) The Psalms provide us the opportunity to participate in a prayerful dialogue with God. At Sunday Mass, there is another reading from one of the books of the New Testament (not a Gospel). What follows in both instances is a reading from the Gospel. This is always accompanied with signs of special honor (such as processional carrying of the book, incense, candle bearers, respectful standing and the Sign of the Cross). This is because the Gospels expressly concern Jesus' life and his words. The Scripture verse chanted before the Gospel is meant to emphasize and express our understanding that Jesus is present in the Word of God. The homily follows the readings. It is an exposition of the readings with applications for daily living. The homily is always given by the priest or deacon.

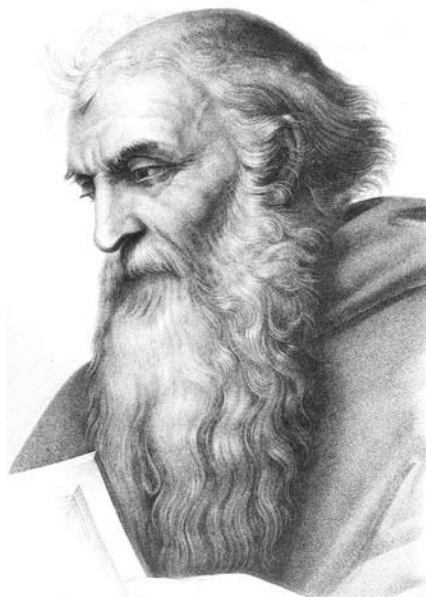
The readings for Sundays have been arranged so that over a three-year period almost all the New Testament and a variety of texts from the Old Testament will have been read. Each new cycle starts on the first Sunday of the season of Advent, four weeks before Christmas. The Gospel reading in year A is generally from Matthew, year B from Mark, and year C from Luke. The Gospel of John is usually read during Easter, Christmas, and to fill out year B, because the Gospel of Mark is short.

Sacred Scripture on Itself

"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph 6:17).

"Is not my word like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer which breaks the rock in pieces?" (Jer 23:29).

"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the



St. Jerome, author of the Vulgate in the late 4th and early 5th centuries, the first major translation of the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into Latin, drawing by Ferréol Bonnemaïson, 1766-1826, after a painting by Raphael

sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tm 3:14-17).

"For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,' we heard this voice borne from Heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic word made more sure. You will do well to pay attention to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns

and the morning star rises in your hearts. First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pt 1:16-21).

"I warn every one who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book" (Rv 22:18-19).

"Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, that no one fall by the same sort of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb 4:11-13).

"For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope" (Rom 15:4).

"How sweet are thy words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps 119:103-105).

(CCC 101-133, 1349)

"Misinterpretation of Scripture can result in selective acceptance of the truths contained there."

Sacred Tradition

So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter. ~ 2 Thessalonians 2:15

THE CHURCH TEACHES that the Word of God is handed on to us both orally and in writing. Sacred Tradition is the oral transmission of his Word, and Sacred Scripture is his written Word. Both are to be accepted with equal devotion and respect.

When Jesus left the earth after his Resurrection, he did not leave the Bible in the hands of his apostles; instead he gave them a mandate to go and teach all nations all that he had commanded (see Mt 28:20). What he had commanded was the fullness of Revelation that he came to reveal. The term apostolic Tradition refers to all that the apostles received from Jesus and learned from his example, or learned at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, and then handed on by their own preaching, example and by the institutions they established.

The early Church guarded this apostolic teaching and passed it down to the next generation. St. Paul admonishes Timothy to carefully guard it and rebukes the Galatians for “so quickly deserting him [that is, Paul] who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel” (Gal 1:6). The apostles’ preaching, including Paul’s, was faithful to Christ and his Gospel. In order that their preaching or Tradition would be preserved, the apostles set aside other men to succeed them as bishops, giving to them the same authority and mandate they had received from Christ.

Eventually, much of this Apostolic Tradition was written down, thereby giving us the New Testament. The sacred writers of the New Testament were inspired to preserve not only what Jesus taught and did but also the early Church’s lived experience and interpretation of his Word. Sacred Tradition, then, came before the New Testament. This is noteworthy because it illustrates that God’s plan for trans-

mitting his Word would include not only the Bible but also Tradition.

The New Testament, while being the primary source for all that God revealed in Christ, is itself a product of Tradition. Tradition is a living and active process which the Church experiences from one age to the next while meditating on the Word of God and the events of salvation history. The Holy Spirit guides the Church in this process and guarantees that Tradition will be an authentic expression of God’s Word for each generation.

After the writing of the New Testament, subsequent generations could reflect not only on Jesus’ teaching but also on that privileged experience of first-generation Christians who knew Jesus when he walked the earth.

The Church in each generation, through prayer, study, and contemplation, reflects on

God’s Word in Scripture and gives new interpretation to it while never altering the Revelation it contains. In every generation, she expresses anew the Word of God against an ever-changing landscape of human society and culture. The diversity of devotions and styles of worship is beautiful and expresses the Church’s catholicity or universality. But these various local traditions are not what we mean when we speak of Tradition. As times change and in light of Tradition, these religious customs and practices may be changed or discarded. Sacred Tradition does not change. It is expressed differently from one age to the next but is always consistent with the truth of God’s Revelation.

Excerpts from Sacred Tradition

It might be helpful to illustrate how Tradition has helped to shape the Church’s teachings and institutions. St. Ignatius of Antioch lived in the first

“Sacred Tradition came before the New Testament.”

PAUL KERRIS

The Dome of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome

century and probably met St. John the Apostle. Ignatius died a martyr in Rome around the turn of the first century and wrote seven letters that are still with us today. In them, he gives us a very strong expression of one's duty to obey the bishop and the priests (whom he calls presbyters). He writes, "[R]espect the bishop as a type of the Father, and the presbyters as the council of God and the college of apostles" (*Letter to the Trallians*). Already from the first century, the sacrament of Holy Orders is seen as having very definite levels, and St. Ignatius understands (as we do today) that the bishop is the shepherd who deserves our respect and obedience.

During his day, he also battled the heresy of Docetism that above all denied the humanity of Jesus Christ and thus refused to believe the Eucharist is Christ's real body and blood. St. Ignatius writes, "[The Docetists] abstain from the Eucharist ... because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the Flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, Flesh which suffered for our sins and which the Father, in his goodness raised up again" (*Letter to the Smyrnaeans*).

Another example from Tradition comes from the writings of St. Irenaeus. He was a bishop in Lyons, France from the years 177 to 202 AD. He writes about the importance of unity of doctrine throughout the whole Church. He also gives us one of our earliest expressions of what later will be called the "Apostles' Creed":

"For the Church, although dispersed throughout the world ..., has received from the apostles and from their disciples the faith in one God, Father Almighty, the Creator of Heaven and earth and sea and all that is in them; and in one Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became flesh for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who announced through the prophets the dispensations and the comings, and the birth from a Virgin, and the Passion, and the Resurrection from the dead, and the Ascension into Heaven of the beloved Christ Jesus our Lord, and his coming from Heaven in the glory of the Father to re-establish all things; and he raising up again of all flesh of all humanity" (*Against Heresies*).

This Creed is not only a summation of what we believe but also "the Rule of Faith" as called by St. Augustine, who was another early bishop of the Church from North Africa. He was bishop in Hippo for nearly 35 years (AD 395-430). He teaches us that the doctrines contained in the Creed are scattered throughout the Bible. They are brought to-

"Tradition could be defined as the living interpretation of Scripture."



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A sister of the Daughters of St. Paul (FSP), founded in 1915, in Alba, Italy; an order dedicated to evangelizing the world with the full message of Christ through all the modern means of social communication

gether in this simple formula to make it easier for even the most uneducated minds to memorize and so adhere to the saving truths revealed in Christ.

Tradition aids the Church in understanding and developing its institutions like the priesthood, its sacraments like the Eucharist, and its creeds like the Apostles' Creed by authentically living out and expressing the Word of God.

Quite simply, Tradition could be defined as the living interpretation of Scripture. In fact, as the Church prays and reflects on God's Word, answers

to some of the thorniest problems in the Bible come to light. For example, when asked about the day of his Second Coming, Jesus responds, "But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in Heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mk 13:32). How can Jesus not know the day of his coming if he is the second person of the Trinity who shares in the all-knowing power of God? This is a very honest question, and one's answer could easily lead to error concerning the person of Jesus Christ. St. Gregory Nazianzen, a fourth-century theologian from the East,

commented on this passage: “[I]s it not perfectly plain to everyone that he does know as God, but says that, as man, he knows not?” (*Fifth Theological Oration*). While his human nature did not of its essence have knowledge of future events, the Lord’s soul, by reason of its union with God [did have such knowledge].” This quote has been preserved in Tradition and helps us understand this Scriptural passage. Jesus by virtue of his divine union with the Father enjoyed the full and complete knowledge of the plan of salvation he had been sent to reveal. The knowledge he had from his human nature was limited. He admits to not knowing the day of his coming because he had not been sent to reveal it (see Acts 1:7).

What About *Sola Scriptura*?

The teaching that the Bible is the one and only source and authority for God’s Revelation is called *sola scriptura*, which is Latin for “Scripture alone.” Martin Luther and the other Protestant reformers broke from the Church, and so proposed this doctrine that cut off the Bible from both the authority and living Tradition of the Church. Most who believe it simply take it for granted that it is true and never ask the question: Where in the Bible do we find this teaching? After all, if Scripture is our only source, then it must be in there.

The first problem is that *sola scriptura* simply is not found in the Bible. We do not find it among the teachings of Moses in the Old Testament or in the teachings of Jesus nor in that of his apostles found in the New Testament. Defenders of *sola scriptura* usually turn to 2 Tm 3:16-17: “*All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*” They claim that Paul here is showing that the Bible alone is sufficient to make a man or woman a complete and upright Christian. Because Paul does not mention Tradition or Church authority as things necessary to equip us to carry out a Christian life, it is asserted that Paul thereby proves *sola scriptura*.

“If the Bible alone was all we needed, then we would expect Jesus to have written it.”

This line of reasoning does violence to both the meaning and context of this passage and runs contrary to what we find elsewhere in Paul’s letters. Paul does not say “Scripture alone” but simply says “*Scripture ... is profitable for training in righteousness,*” leaving the door wide open that other things could be useful and necessary for our sanctification. Also, this interpretation runs completely against what Paul is saying just two verses previous: “[A]s for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed” (2 Tm 3:14). Paul is exhorting Timothy to hold fast to the oral teaching and preaching which Paul had given him. At the end of his First Letter to Timothy, Paul exhorts him to diligently guard what has been entrusted to him (see 1 Tm 6:20). This is another refer-

ence to the importance of the oral Tradition that Paul had handed over to Timothy (see also 2 Tm 2:2; 1 Cor 11:2).

A second problem is the witness and example of Jesus.

If the Bible alone was all we needed, then we would expect Jesus to have written it. But he did not; instead he instituted the Church (see Mt 16:18) and left it with the authority to interpret and to teach everything that he had taught (see Mt 28:20). He also told his disciples, when he sent them out to preach in his name, “*He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me*” (Lk 10:16).

Finally, in principle, *sola scriptura* is illogical because it must affirm the Church’s Tradition and authority at least up through the fourth century when the canon of the New Testament was decided. The Bible does not come with an “inspired table of contents.” The only way we know which books be-

long there and which ones do not is by the authority of the Church. The Church, beginning with the Council of Carthage (397 AD), drew up the first list or canon of inspired books for the New Testament. Accepting this canon means not accepting *sola scriptura*, because accepting the decision of a Church council is the equivalent of accepting the Church’s authority and Sacred Tradition.

(CCC 78-84, 2651)



St. Catherine of Alexandria, by Carlo Dolci, 1616-1686

STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE

In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets. ~ Hebrews 1:1

THE BIBLE is actually a small library of books. It is divided into two parts, the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament relates the whole history of God's saving interaction with humankind until the coming of Jesus of Nazareth. The New Testament records God's personal encounter with humanity in the person of Jesus Christ, who lived, was crucified, died, and rose again for our salvation. These accounts are contained in what are called the Gospels, which form the very heart of the Bible. They are deeply revered by the Church because they are the principal source for her life and teaching about our Savior Jesus Christ. The New Testament also includes other books and letters that give an account of the Church in her infancy.

Because of the existence of other writings that were not inspired by God, the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit determined which writings were authentic and inspired, drawing up a complete list called the canon of Scripture. There are 46 books in the canon of the Old Testament (or 45 if *Jeremiah* and *Lamentations* are counted as one). There is a tradition that Moses was the author of the first five books of the Old Testament; these five books are called, collectively, the Pentateuch (derived from Greek word that means "five cases," perhaps referring to the boxes in which the scrolls were kept). By 100 BC, this list was complete (an asterisk indicates that the book is deuterocanonical; the handout entitled Deuterocanonical Books of the Old Testament explains the reason for labeling some books this way).

There are 27 books in the New Testament canon. The letters of St. Paul were the first ones written, beginning between 50 and 55 AD and ending with his death about 67 AD. The four Gospels followed soon

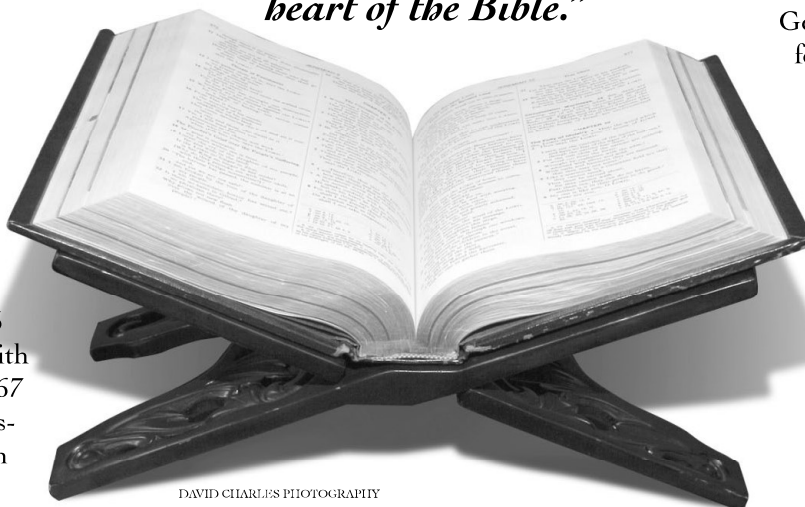
after, beginning with either the Gospel of Matthew or the Gospel of Mark and concluding with the Gospel of John. All the Gospels were written by the end of the 1st century. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are very similar and, for this reason, are called the "synoptic" (from a Greek word that means a similar view) Gospels. By tradition, St. Matthew is the Matthew identified as one of Jesus' apostles. St. Mark is named in the Acts of the Apostles and his Gospel is regarded as the substance of St. Peter's preaching. St. Luke is also named in the Acts of the Apostles and acted as St. Paul's traveling companion for a while. By his own description, he carefully researched his Gospel from eyewitnesses. The Acts of the Apostles, also written by St. Luke, was probably written before St. Paul's death and is at least in part history that St. Luke himself witnessed. The Gospel of St. John, by tradition, is written by the John identified as another of Jesus' apostles and also, by tradition, as the apostle "*whom Jesus loved*" (Jn 13:23; 19:25).

The remainder of the New Testament consists of letters written by St. Peter, St. James, St. Jude, and St. John, all apostles; the Letter to the Hebrews, whose authorship is not certain although it had traditionally been attributed to St. Paul; and the final book, Revelation, attributed as well to St. John the Evangelist.

We must understand that, although the Bible consists of 73 books written over a period of more than a millennium, by perhaps 40 human authors, its principal author is the Holy Spirit who

inspired each human author to write only what God wanted written for the sake of our salvation. In essence, therefore, Sacred Scripture is one book, and the one book is Jesus Christ, the Word of God, about whom all of Sacred Scripture writes and in whom all Scripture is fulfilled.

"The Gospels form the very heart of the Bible."



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STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE

OLD TESTAMENT

Pentateuch

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

Historical

Joshua
Judges
Ruth
1 Samuel
2 Samuel
1 Kings
2 Kings
1 Chronicles
2 Chronicles
Ezra
Nehemiah
Tobit*
Judith*
Esther
1 Maccabees*
2 Maccabees*

Wisdom

Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Songs
Wisdom*
Sirach*

Prophetic

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Baruch*
Ezekiel
Daniel
Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi



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*A deacon proclaims the Gospel reading
during Mass*

NEW TESTAMENT

Gospels

Matthew
Mark
Luke
John

Pauline Letters (Epistles)

Romans
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians
1 Timothy
2 Timothy
Titus
Philemon

Other Letters (Epistles)

Hebrews
James
1 Peter
2 Peter
2 John
3 John
Jude

Other Writings

Acts
1 John
Revelation

* These books are excluded from the Protestant canon, or collection, of Scripture.

ABBREVIATIONS FOR BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

Following, in alphabetical order, are the abbreviations used in the handouts
for the books of Sacred Scripture:

Acts	Acts of the Apostles	Gal	Galatians	3 Jn	3 John
Am	Amos	Gn	Genesis	Jon	Jonah
Bar	Baruch	Hb	Habakkuk	Jos	Joshua
1 Chr	1 Chronicles	Heb	Hebrews	Jude	Jude
2 Chr	2 Chronicles	Hg	Haggai	1 Kgs	1 Kings
Col	Colossians	Hos	Hosea	2 Kgs	2 Kings
1 Cor	1 Corinthians	Is	Isaiah	Lam	Lamentations
2 Cor	2 Corinthians	Jas	James	Lk	Luke
Dn	Daniel	Jb	Job	Lv	Leviticus
Dt	Deuteronomy	Jdt	Judith	Mal	Malachi
Eccl	Ecclesiastes	Jer	Jeremiah	1 Mc	1 Maccabees
Eph	Ephesians	Jgs	Judges	2 Mc	2 Maccabees
Est	Esther	Jl	Joel	Mi	Micah
Ex	Exodus	Jn	John	Mk	Mark
Ez	Ezekiel	1 Jn	1 John	Mt	Matthew
Ezr	Ezra	2 Jn	2 John	Na	Nahum
				Neh	Nehemiah
				Nm	Numbers
				Ob	Obadiah
				Phil	Philippians
				Phlm	Philemon
				Prv	Proverbs
				Ps(s)	Psalms
				1 Pt	1 Peter
				2 Pt	2 Peter
				Rom	Romans
				Ru	Ruth
				Rv	Revelation
				Sir	Sirach
				1 Sm	1 Samuel
				2 Sm	2 Samuel
				Song	Song of Songs
				Tb	Tobit
				1 Thes	1 Thessalonians
				2 Thes	2 Thessalonians
				Ti	Titus
				1 Tm	1 Timothy
				2 Tm	2 Timothy
				Wis	Wisdom
				Zec	Zechariah
				Zep	Zephaniah




Chi-Rho symbol, formed from the first two letters from the word 'Christ' in the Greek language, 4th century Spanish tombstone

(CCC 102, 105-106, 109-111, 120, 128-129)

Deuterocanonical Books of the Old Testament

*Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel:
Write in a book all the words that I have spoken to you. ~ Jeremiah 30:2*

 NE OF THE MOST frequently asked questions about the Bible by Christians who are not Catholic is why there are seven more books in a Catholic Bible than a Protestant one. The answer to this question involves a little research into Church history as well as into Judaism in the centuries just before and after Christ.

The deuterocanonical (a word meaning “second canon” or second list) books of the Old Testament are those not usually found in a Hebrew or Protestant Bible. They are: Judith, Tobit, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach, and Baruch, plus parts of Daniel and Esther. By about 100 BC, a Greek translation of the entire Old Testament, including a number of books existing only in Greek, was made for the use of Jews who lived outside Palestine and who had difficulty reading Hebrew. The seven books listed above are those originally written in Greek. However, the Jews in Palestine eventually rejected this translation, and late in 100 AD began to draw up their own list of Old Testament books, and excluded them.

This controversy between Greek- and Hebrew-speaking Jews did not seem to affect the Church. In fact, when the New Testament books were being written, the Greek and not the Hebrew text was almost exclusively used when an Old Testament reference was quoted. It is true that no references from the deuterocanonical books appear in the New Testament, but if that alone were the sole criterion for determining their value, then we would also have to exclude other Old Testament books which are also not cited, notably Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs.

It is clear that, during the first few centuries of the Church’s history, the deuterocanonical books were not thought to be inspired Scripture by everyone, but by the end of the 4th century these books were universally accepted by the Church in the canon (that is, in the official list of books recognized as inspired by the Holy Spirit).

Even St. Jerome, the great biblical scholar

who at first disputed these books, later included them in the official Latin Bible translation called the Vulgate. This Latin Bible was used for nearly a thousand years throughout the Christian world before the invention of the printing press around 1450, when Bibles began to be printed in other languages.

The printing press made the Bible more accessible to people, but also brought many problems. The work of translation is very tedious and requires great skill and knowledge. Many of the translations were poorly done and full of discrepancies. Even the King James Version, which was and still is one of the better translations, had over 30,000 errors in it. Amidst this printing frenzy came Martin Luther.

When Martin Luther broke from the Church, he rejected the deuterocanonical books, not out of any concern for whether they had been written in Greek or Hebrew, but for doctrinal reasons. For example, in 2 Maccabees 15:12-16, a story is told of a vision in which the dead are praying and interceding for the People of Israel. Luther rejected the doctrine that the dead could intercede for the living and so excluded 2 Maccabees and all the other deuterocanonical books in his translation of the Bible. Even books in the New Testament, such as the Letter of James and the Letter to the Hebrews, were initially rejected by Luther because they did not fit his theological views on faith and salvation.

Today, because of the work of joint scholarship among Protestants and Catholics, many Protestant groups accept the value of these books. Anglicans and Episcopalians now use them in their prayer and liturgy. And even many non-Catholic Bibles include them between their covers, usually listed separately at the end in a section called “apocryphal writings” — that is, additional writings not considered to be God’s inspired word — or simply the Apocrypha. Sometimes this section also includes books not recognized

as canonical by the Catholic Church.

(CCC 120)

*“By the end of the 4th century these books were
universally accepted by the Church.”*

Can the Bible be Taken Literally?

And there was evening and there was morning, one day. ~ Genesis 1:5

SINCE THE MIDDLE of the nineteenth century, there has been a ferocious battle between supporters and debunkers of a literal interpretation of the entire Bible. The most well-known battles have been fought over whether creation really occurred in the manner described, and whether Adam and Eve really existed or humanity was merely a product of gradual evolution from human-like animals.

Fundamental Principles

Before beginning to discuss specifics, the Catholic understanding of the literal truth of the Bible must be clearly explained. It is Catholic doctrine that God is the principal author of all of Sacred Scripture, but that the human authors inspired by God used their own capabilities and powers, and wrote within their own limitations, as true authors of what God wanted written. Since God is the source of all truth, indeed Truth itself, Scripture teaches us the truth. “Since therefore all that the inspired authors or sacred writers affirm should be regarded as affirmed by the Holy Spirit, 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”¹ (CCC 107; italics added).

It is essential in reading any part of Scripture to learn what each human author intended to write, and to understand as completely as possible the cultures in which its authors lived and the usual ways that each culture felt,

spoke, and narrated events. Thus we should not regard Sacred Scripture as a textbook on science, as a manual on botany and zoology, or as a comprehensive history of Palestine. It is, rather, a composite of literary types, ranging from ancient family stories to royal chronicles, from allegory to drama, from prophecy to poetry, from regulations for worship to detailed laws regulating society, from sublime prayer to practical rules for living.

It is equally essential to interpret Sacred Scripture in light of what God wanted to reveal. The Church has spelled out how this is to be done. First, the reader must regard the Bible as a single book, the unity of God’s plan centered on the person of Jesus (see CCC 124). Every part must be read in light of the whole, and the whole is illuminated and made plain by the entirety of Jesus’ saving work. Second, the reader must interpret Scripture in light of the Church’s living Tradition. “Sacred Scripture is written principally in the Church’s heart rather than in documents and records, for the Church carries in her Tradition the living memorial of God’s Word” (CCC 113). The authority granted by Christ to his Church ensures that the Church will not err in interpreting Scripture, and Catholics are bound to submit to the authority of the Church in seeking the meaning of any part of Scripture. Third, the reader must pay close attention to the “analogy of faith,” that is, the unity and harmony of all the truths of the faith among themselves.

The Fathers of the Church



Jesus raising Jairus' daughter

“The story of creation was not intended as a scientific description of events no one could possibly have witnessed.”

¹ *Dei Verbum*, 11

have always taught that Sacred Scripture can be understood in four ways, or senses, the literal sense and three spiritual senses. All the spiritual senses are based on the literal sense, which is discovered by exegesis (close study following rules of sound interpretation). The three spiritual senses are the allegorical (that is, how events are significant in relation to Christ) (see handout on Typology for a more detailed discussion of the allegorical sense of Scripture), the moral (that is, the way that Scripture leads us to good and just behavior), and the anagogical (that is, the eternal significance of events and realities).

Creation

Most Christians understand that the story of creation found in the Bible (see Gn 1:1-31) was not intended by its human author (who is, by tradition, Moses) as a scientific description of events no one could possibly have witnessed. Instead, the book of Genesis, as the inspired Word of God, teaches us in poetic language that God exists (see also 2 Mc 7:22-23, 28)), that he is a real and personal Being (see also Col 1:15) who is eternal (see also Rom 16:26), that he created everything from nothing by the force of his will alone, and that the universe he created has order and purpose (see also Wis 11:20). The story of the “six days of creation” is a patterned sequence that, in poetic form, expresses this order and the hierarchical structure of creation. It is not necessary to see each day as a 24-hour period from sunset to sunset (and the creation of the sun is not described, in any case, until the fourth day).

The story of creation in the book of Genesis is



The Good Shepherd, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and Noah with a dove symbolically represented, 3rd century frescoes in the catacombs near Rome

“It is essential to learn what each human author intended to write, and to understand the cultures in which its authors lived and the usual ways that each culture felt, spoke, and narrated events. It is equally essential to interpret Sacred Scripture in light of what God wanted to reveal.”

only the beginning of God’s progressive Revelation of himself and his plan of salvation to humanity, through his Chosen People, the Israelites. Through a series of covenants, through the creation of a common worship, through prayer and prophecy and law and chastisement, the one God taught the world the mysteries of himself, of our origin and fall from grace, and of our restoration to his friendship.

The Creation of Humankind and the Fall of Adam and Eve

There are various ways to understand the story of creation of human beings and the sin of our first parents found in the second and third chapters of the book of Genesis. It is not a fantastic story or mere myth that has no bearing on the reality of what actually took place but, instead, a story that is told through symbols, which therefore must be understood accordingly.

However the human body came into existence — whether it was a special creation or through a slow evolution from human-like ancestors guided by God — God endowed humans with an immortal soul and called us to share in his own life. This is expressed symbolically by the description of Adam’s creation: “the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Gn 2:7). Man is “the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake”² (CCC 356). Each of us is a person — a someone, not a something — capable through the power of grace of self-knowledge, self-mastery, and the freedom to give himself or herself to others and enter into communion with others. We alone are called

² *Gaudium et Spes*, 24 § 3

to have faith in and to love God; we alone have an eternal destiny.

The Church teaches that we have a single set of first parents. The names of our first parents are symbolic: “Adam” seems to mean “man” and, perhaps, “earth.” “Eve” seems to mean “life” or “life-giver” (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible called the Septuagint used the Greek word *Zoë*, that is, “life,” for Eve’s name).

The story of Adam’s creation alone, and of the creation of woman, are also deeply symbolic. *“Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him’”* (Gn 2:18). God tells us that we are made for each other; that we are meant to be a community of persons, and that men and women are complementary, partners to each other. Eve’s creation “from Adam’s rib” (see Gn 2:22), and Adam’s joyous response — *“This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh”* (Gn 2:23) — gives us an understanding of the wonder they experienced in each other in their state of “original unity” and “original justice” before they sinned against God. They were happy, free from suffering, illness, and the threat of death, and in

ing the fruit of *any* tree in the Garden (see Gn 3:1) — and then actually lied, telling them that what God said about the consequences of eating of the fruit of *one* tree was not true (see Gn 3:4). He then went even further, telling them that God had forbidden the fruit of this one tree because, if they ate it, they would be *“like God”* (Gn 3:5). And they, in their pride and urge to believe Satan rather than the God who had given them everything, disobeyed God’s command (see Gn 3:6). They wanted to achieve what God had intended for them all along — but by doing it their way, not his way. They preferred to reject God and to seek themselves instead. *And all human sinfulness springs from this same impulse.*

Adam and Eve plunged themselves and their descendants out of communion with God into a fallen world. They were cut off from God (see Gn 3:24), their relationship with each other became one of distrust, recrimination, and domination (see Gn 3:12-13, 16), and suffering, disease, and death entered the world (see Gn 3:16-19). They lived in disharmony with each other and with nature, and humanity quickly descended into a cesspool of sin (see Gn 4:8;

“However the human body came into existence — whether it was a special creation or through a slow evolution — God endowed humans with an immortal soul and called us to share in his own life.”

daily communion with God (see Gn 3:8). They lived in complete harmony with nature and had complete self-mastery.

We must also understand that Adam and Eve were tested by God. God had given humankind free will, so that we might freely return the love that God had given to us in making us. Our first parents were required to obey one, and one only command: not to eat of the fruit of one specific tree in the Garden of Eden (see Gn 2:17). Who knows whether it was an apple, or some other kind of fruit? It doesn’t matter. The *“tree of the knowledge of good and evil”* (Gn 2:17) symbolizes our dependence on our Creator and our subjection to moral laws that govern our freedom.

Although the book of Genesis isn’t specific about the identity of the “serpent” who tempted Adam and Eve (see Gn 3:1-5), our understanding that it is Satan himself, the fallen angel, is confirmed in the book of Revelation, which calls him *“that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world”* (Rv 12:9). Satan began with a leading question — asking whether God had forbidden Adam and Eve from eat-

Gn 6:5). There was absolutely nothing they could do to undo the terrible effects of their sin, but God, in his great mercy, promised them a Savior (see Gn 3:15). These are the truths that the book of Genesis teaches us.

The Theory of Evolution

Scientists have propounded numerous theories that try to reconcile scientific discoveries with the story of creation in Sacred Scripture. It is not possible to go into all the aspects of this theological warfare, but it needs to be understood that the Catholic Church has established some very specific rules to address this issue.

First, we need to understand that God is the author of truth. What we learn through scientific discovery — the laws by which God governs the material universe, the geological history of the earth, the genetic code governing all living beings, the ways that species develop, flourish, and vanish — cannot contradict their Creator. Man, a creature, does not create but merely discovers truth.

Second, we need to recognize that science has proceeded haltingly and that the process of discovery never ends. Many times, science has had to revisit its theories and discard those that are incompatible with new discoveries. Scientists rightly glory in the “scientific method,” but rarely discuss its essential premise, which is that scientific theory stands only so long as it cannot be proven false. Furthermore, theories for which no way can be devised to test whether they are true or false are not scientific theories at all.

Third, we need to realize that science cannot discover everything. Science can look at “what” and “how” and “when” and “where” and, sometimes, “who,” but it cannot address the biggest question of all: “why.” Science is not designed to answer questions of purpose and meaning, and attempts by individual scientists to do so fail. Some scientists, unwilling to admit that science cannot discover all the answers, resort to rejecting purpose and meaning. This is emphatically contrary not only to Catholic doctrine but even to common sense.

Fourth, those who have sought answers to questions of purpose and meaning by use of human reason alone often fail to discover the truth. In human history, there have been many different ways of understanding the origins of the universe, of humanity, of good and evil. The Church teaches that, while unaided human reason can know that God exists and that he is the Creator of all things, it is unable to come to knowledge of all the truths needed for our salvation, and that we therefore need divine Revelation.

Any explanation or theory of cre-

“Understanding the days of creation as six 24-hour cycles is no more necessary than thinking that Jesus’ ‘hour’ was 60 minutes long.”

taken place over a long period of time. It is not acceptable to deny the existence of God as Creator of everything, to see creation as meaningless, to deny the dignity of each human person, or to see humanity as having an accidental or purposeless existence.

When and How Can the Bible be Taken Literally?

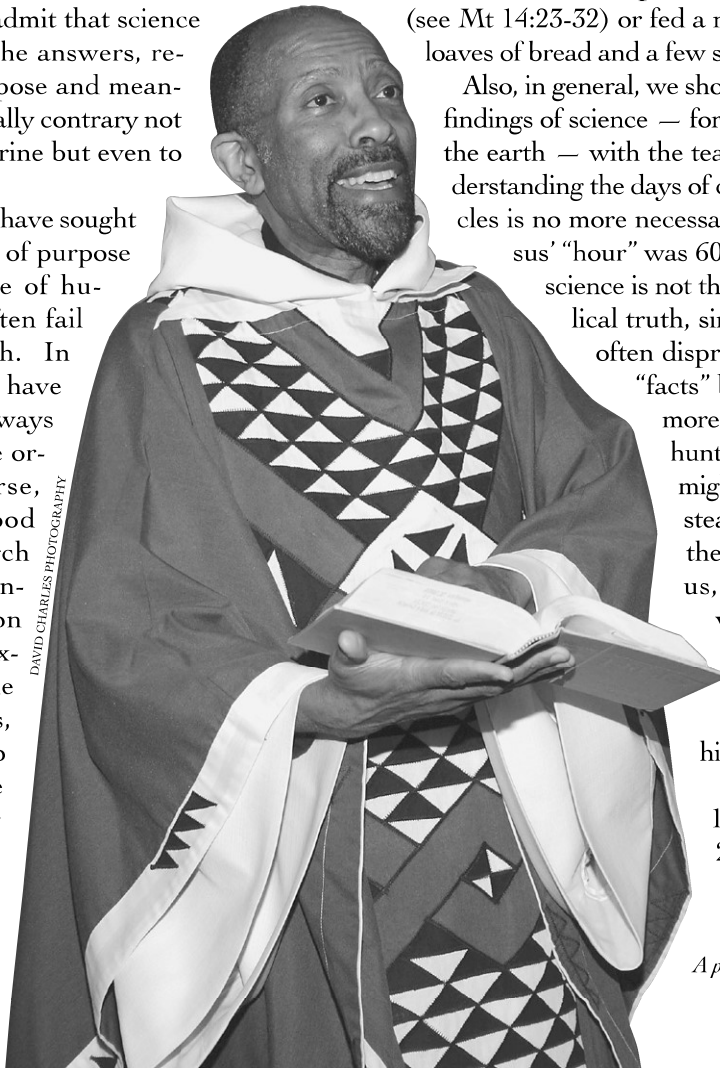
As a general principle, the Bible should be taken literally unless there is obvious reason not to do so. Failure to understand how something could be so is not one of these obvious reasons, since God, the Creator of the universe, can suspend the laws of physics whenever he chooses (for example, when Jesus walked on water (see Mt 14:23-32) or fed a multitude with only a few loaves of bread and a few small fish (see Mk 8:1-9)).

Also, in general, we should seek to harmonize the findings of science — for example, the great age of the earth — with the teachings of the Bible. Understanding the days of creation as six 24-hour cycles is no more necessary than thinking that Jesus’ “hour” was 60 minutes long. However,

science is not therefore the arbiter of Biblical truth, since scientific theories are often disproved and many scientific “facts” become less factual when more is learned. We should not hunt down ways we think God might have “lied” to us, but instead should read and study the Bible as God’s words to us, his beloved creatures, whom he wishes to know the truths we need to seek him, find him, and share eternity in his glorious presence.

(CCC 106-107, 109-119, 124, 128-130, 283-289, 296, 299, 337, 356-357, 362, 371-372, 374-379, 390, 396-401)

A priest preaches from the Sacred Scriptures at Mass



DAVID CHARLES PHOTOGRAPHY

Sacred Scripture — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why did God bother to give us revelation and even have it committed to writing?
2. What is in Sacred Scripture that makes it so important to read?
3. Why can't we pick and choose what pleases us in the Bible and ignore the rest?
4. In what ways can I give good example by showing respect for the Holy Book?
5. Why do we need the Church, if the Bible contains all that is needed for our salvation?

Sacred Tradition — Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. Why is a Church necessary? Isn't Jesus himself all I need, for he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life?
2. Why isn't my own interpretation of Sacred Scripture just as good as the next person's?
3. Why is the connection between the Holy Spirit and the Church essential for the communication of God's revelation?
4. How does the connection between the Holy Spirit and the Church inspire us to have faith in the Church's teaching?



St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (St. Edith Stein)

BORN 1891; DIED 1942
RELIGIOUS AND MARTYR
FEAST DAY: AUGUST 9

ST. TERESA BENEDICTA OF THE CROSS was almost an exact contemporary of Adolph Hitler, only two and a half years younger than him. Yet while his depravity resulted in her death, the brilliant light of her faith made tawdry all his aspirations to worldly glory.

Edith was born in Breslau, Germany (modern Wrocław, Poland), the youngest of seven children of Siegfried Stein and Auguste Courant, Orthodox Jews. Edith's father died of sunstroke when she was not yet two years old. By thirteen, she abandoned Judaism and told everyone that she was an atheist. Educated by people who espoused only rationalism — that only what could be observed could be proved — she concluded that Judaism could not be proved and so she could not accept it.

As a teenager, Edith already displayed a tremendous love of learning, and a mind brilliant in everything but mathematics. She was also interested in politics and espoused the right for women to vote. At fourteen, angry because an anti-Semitic teacher had not given her a deserved top ranking, she quit school. Private tutoring allowed her to complete her studies, and she entered the University of Breslau at twenty, one of the first women admitted to a major university in Germany. Although at first interested in psychology, she transferred to the University of Göttingen, Ger-

***“Her atheism
was shattered
in a moment.”***

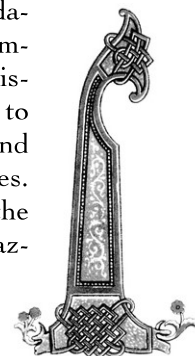
many to study the new approach in philosophy called “phenomenology,” which had been developed shortly after Edith's birth by faculty member Edmund Husserl to elevate psychology by harmonizing observation, theory, and reason. She became Husserl's most gifted protégé and later his assistant and collaborator. Edith sought out phenomenology because she wanted to discover a way of thinking deeply rooted in truth, and felt that this approach, which emphasized observing everything without prejudice or emotional blinders, would be the best way to discover truth. She would write later that she was seeking truth, and that those who seek truth long to find God, whether they know it or not.

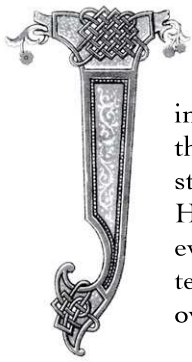
She completed her doctorate at the University of Freiburg with highest honors at twenty-five.

During the calamitous years of World War I, Edith was already beginning to explore Judaism, Protestantism, and Catholicism. A number of her Jewish friends had become Christians, mostly Lutheran. In 1917, she went to visit one of these, a close friend whose husband had died in the war, to offer her condolences. Instead of meeting a woman bowed under the weight of sorrow, she found the widow amaz-



PAUL KERRIS





ingly calm. Edith wrote later: "It was then that I first encountered the cross and the divine strength which it inspires in those who bear it." Her atheism was shattered in a moment, and even her original Judaism paled before the mystery of Christ's redemptive suffering and victory over death.

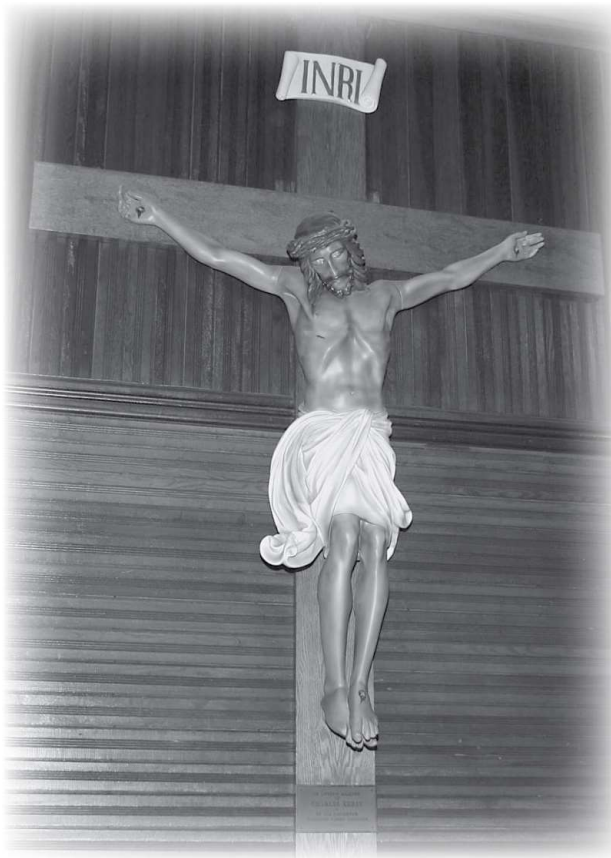
The next few years for Edith were a time of both hesitation and intense exploration for something that would fill her heart as well as satisfy her mind. Among her readings during this period were the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, which she approached as a psychologist but concluded by praying as one thirsting for God. At the home of friends, she discovered the autobiography of the great Carmelite mystic St. Teresa of Ávila, *The Life*. Devouring it in one all-night session, she joyfully realized: "That is the truth!" The next morning, she bought a Catholic catechism and a missal for Mass. Soon thereafter, she went to Mass for the first time. After Mass, she asked the priest to baptize her. When he asked where she had obtained her instruction, she smilingly replied that he need only question her about her understanding of the faith. She was baptized six months later at the age of thirty, an event that left her mother, to whom she had grown closer over the years, grief-stricken.

Although by this time a celebrated philosopher and writer, Edith took a teaching position at a Dominican school in Speyer, Germany. She was a demanding teacher, yet helpful to her charges both in their studies and in their personal problems, extending herself especially to girls who were lonely or homesick. She also quiet-

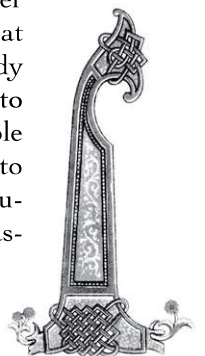
ly helped the poor of Speyer. She wrote about women both as professionals and with dignity equal in God's eyes to men, focusing on the ethics of the female professions and on the supernatural vocation of women. Edith also trained Dominican nuns who themselves intended to be teachers, becoming informally the Mistress of Novices because of her practice of virtue as well as because of her formation of them as teachers. She immersed herself in the study of Catholic philosophy, and her translations and commentaries led to public lectures, so that she continued to be in the public eye.

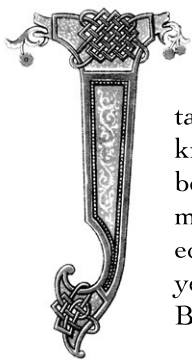
Soon after her baptism, Edith felt called to become a Carmelite nun, but her very fame and influence led her spiritual directors to persuade her to postpone entering the cloister, feeling that she was doing a great deal of good in the apostolate of teaching. They also knew that her mother's heart would be broken. Edith spent these years deepening her life of prayer. She read Scripture, prayed the Liturgy of the Hours, and loved greatly the liturgical life of the Church.

At forty-one, Edith was appointed lecturer at the Institute of Scientific Pedagogy at Munster, Germany. However, the Nazi regime forced her resignation in 1933, and she was no longer permitted to lecture publicly. As a result, her spiritual director felt that it was time for her to enter the Carmelite order, which she did at Cologne, Germany that year. She had already rejected opportunities to flee to London or to South America, choosing instead the probable path of suffering and consciously intending to offer her life for both Jews and their persecutors. Her mother, then eighty-four, was devas-



DAVID CHARLES PHOTOGRAPHY





tated by Edith's decision, especially since she knew she would never see her daughter again, because Carmelite convents were cloistered (her mother died three years later, having responded to Edith's letters only after a silence of two years). Edith took the religious name of Teresa Benedicta of the Cross.

Although Teresa had never cooked, sewed, or done housework and never attained great competence in the domestic chores that make up the greater part of convent life, she saw these as a school of humility necessary to counteract all the honors that had been heaped on her. As a member of the community, she was cheerful, warm, serene, and full of laughter. Yet her effort to live the simple life of the community cost her a great deal since, well past the age of forty, she had to learn the radical obedience and self-denial of religious life. Her superiors continued to allow her to write, and in the next several years she wrote pamphlets and booklets as well as completing *Potency and Act* and her most famous work, *Finite and Eternal Being*. Her letters influenced several friends and former students to convert to Catholicism or to enter religious life. Her sister Rosa, who had believed the Catholic faith for years, was baptized soon after their mother's death.

The Nazi grip on Germany tightened in the next few years, so in 1938 the Carmelites secretly sent Teresa from Cologne to the convent of Echt in the Netherlands. She knew that staying would have put her sisters in religion in danger for sheltering her as a Jew; they sent her away because they feared for her life. At Echt, she gave spiritual direction to novices and worked on her last book, *The Science of the Cross*. Two years later, Rosa came to live at the convent outside the enclosure, acting as doorkeeper. She also sought to become a Carmelite, but the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands in 1940 prevented this from happening.

As the Nazis began to harass and hound

Dutch Jews, all the Christian churches protested. The Nazis then threatened to round up Jewish converts to Christianity. Realizing the peril of her situation, Teresa's superiors tried to send her to a convent in Switzerland. However, the convent could not take Rosa, so Teresa asked to remain until a way could be found to house both of them. This was done, but neither could leave without permits from the government. Before this was obtained, on July 1, 1942 all Catholic children of Jewish descent were forbidden Catholic education; no other schools were open to them. The Archbishop of Utrecht protested, condemning as well the de-

portation of Jews from Holland. In response, on July 2, the Nazis arrested all priests and members of Dutch religious orders of Jewish descent, including Teresa and Rosa. In the hearing of others, Teresa said to Rosa: "Come, let us go for the sake of our people." They were taken away in a police

van and kept for a few days at Dutch transit camps, where Teresa prayed, consoled people, and cared for the children of terrified mothers, spreading peace to everyone she helped. She and Rosa were then transported across Germany with hundreds of others over a period of four days to the concentration camp of Auschwitz, Poland. They experienced the dreadful conditions of the cattle cars: they were hot and crowded, had no place to relieve themselves, and lived with stench and those who went insane or died during the ordeal. Following their arrival, Teresa and Rosa, with the others chosen for death, were forced to remove all their clothing, given soap and towels, and told to walk the long distance to "showers" to be "disinfected." Because the Nazis had not yet worked out the "right" amount of poisonous gas, people were still alive twenty-four hours later. More poisonous gas was added to kill the rest. Teresa and Rosa died together, naked before the world but clothed in glory before God.

"She had already rejected opportunities to flee, choosing instead the probable path of suffering and consciously intending to offer her life for both Jews and their persecutors."

