The Bible

* Introduction
  + Grew up Protestant, though not exactly a “Bible” Protestant. As a kid, I would regularly mock portions of the Bible as a result of a certain dissatisfaction with the beliefs I had received.
  + Nevertheless, it was through debates with Mormons that I began to take the Bible seriously. At first, only to find ways to refute them in argument.
    - In particular, to point out inconsistencies with their own claimed sacred texts, the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants
    - These texts are claimed to be inspired complements to the Bible, the former composed many years prior to Christ’s coming, the latter as a result of the revelations to Joseph Smith.
  + As time went on, I began to take it more seriously for its own sake
* Importance of question
  + What is status of bible, the Word of God?
    - How do we judge what is or is not inspired?
    - Is it meant to be a comprehensive collection of what God has revealed?
    - Is it meant to be the sole and highest judge of all that man must believe?
    - Is it sufficiently clear in itself? I.e., can it be read and understood by anyone without the aid of any official interpretations?
* Initial Protestant Position
  + Leo XIII in Providentissimus Deus: But first it must be clearly understood whom we have to oppose and contend against, and what are their tactics and their arms. In earlier times the contest was chiefly with those who, relying on private judgment and repudiating the divine traditions and teaching office of the Church, held the Scriptures to be the one source of revelation and the final appeal in matters of Faith
  + Bible is highest authority and sole & comprehensive source of our knowledge of revelation
    - Smacald Articles
      * "We believe that the only rule and standard by which all [dogmas](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05089a.htm) and all [doctors](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05072b.htm) are to be weighed and judged, is nothing else but the prophetic and apostolic writings of the [Old](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14526a.htm) and [New Testaments](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14530a.htm)" (Form. Concordiae, 1577). Taken from New Advent.com Encyclopedea on Rule of Faith
    - Book of Concordance
      * In this way the distinction between the Holy Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament and all other writings is preserved, and the Holy Scriptures alone remain the only judge, rule, and standard, according to which, as the only test-stone, all dogmas shall and must be discerned and judged, as to whether they are good or evil, right or wrong.
      * 8 But the other symbols and writings cited are not judges, as are the Holy Scriptures, but only a testimony and declaration of the faith, as to how at any time the Holy Scriptures have been understood and explained in the articles in controversy in the Church of God by those then living, and how the opposite dogma was rejected and condemned [by what arguments the dogmas conflicting with the Holy Scripture were rejected and condemned].
    - Westminster Confession of Faith (1643-7),
      * which declared that the "Books of the Old and New Testaments are . . . given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life" (art. ii), but that the "authority of the [Holy Scripture](https://www.newadvent.org/bible) . . . dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church" (art. iv).
    - John Calvin, Institutes of Religion
      * Book 1, 7: But since no daily responses are given from heaven, and the Scriptures are the only records in which God has been pleased to consign his truth to perpetual remembrance, the full authority which they ought to possess with the faithful is not recognised, unless they are believed to have come from heaven, as directly as if God had been heard giving utterance to them.
      * Book 1, 7: A most pernicious error has very generally prevailed; viz.,that Scripture is of importance only in so far as conceded to it by the suffrage of the Church; as if the eternal and inviolable truth of God could depend on the will of men
      * For if the Christian Church was founded at first on the writings of the prophets, and the preaching of the apostles, that doctrine, wheresoever it may be found, was certainly ascertained and sanctioned antecedently to the Church, since, but for this, the Church herself never could have existed.
  + Authenticity of Bible assured not by authority of Church, by directly by Holy Ghost in heart of individual believer
    - Wesminster Confession
      * They add: "We may be moved by the testimony of the [Church](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03744a.htm) to an high and reverent esteem of the [Holy Scripture](https://www.newadvent.org/bible) . . . yet our full persuasion of the [infallible](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07790a.htm) [truth](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm) and divine authority thereof is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts" (art. v)
    - Calvin, Institutes of Religion
      * As to the question, How shall we be persuaded that it came from God without recurring to a decree of the Church? it is just the same as if it were asked, How shall we learn to distinguish light from darkness, white from black, sweet from bitter? Scripture bears upon the face of it as clear evidence of its truth, as white and black do of their colour, sweet and bitter of their taste.
      * . Hence, the highest proof of Scripture is uniformly taken from the character of him whose Word it is. The prophets and apostles boast not their own acuteness or any qualities which win credit to speakers, nor do they dwell on reasons; but they appeal to the sacred name of God, in order that the whole world may be compelled to submission. The next thing to be considered is, how it appears not probable merely, but certain, that the name of God is neither rashly nor cunningly pretended. If, then, we would consult most effectually for our consciences, and save them from being driven about in a whirl of uncertainty, from wavering, and even stumbling at the smallest obstacle, our conviction of the truth of Scripture must be derived from a higher source than human conjectures, judgements, or reasons; namely, the secret testimony of the Spirit.
      * Profane men think that religion rests only on opinion, and, therefore, that they may not believe foolishly, or on slight grounds, desire and insist to have it proved by reason that Moses and the prophets were divinely inspired. But I answer that the testimony of the Spirit is superior to reason. For as God alone can properly bear witness to his own words, so these words will not obtain full credit in the hearts of men, until they are sealed by the inward testimony of the Spirit. The same Spirit, therefore, who spoke by the mouth of the prophets, must penetrate our hearts, in order to convince us that they faithfully delivered the message with which they were divinely entrusted.

**Catholic Answer**

* Question of inspiration/revelation
  + What is revelation: Garrigou Lagrange
    - Objectively
      * Actio supernaturalis libera et essentialiter supernaturalis qua Deus nobis loquens per prophetas et novissime per Christum, sub quadam obsuritate manifestavit mysteria supernaturalia naturalesque religionis veritates (ita ut deinceps infallibiliter proponi possint ab Ecclesia sine ulla sgnificationis mutatione, usque ad finem mundi)
    - Subjectively
      * Judgment on authenticity of message from God.
      * Requires proportionate light; thus, man needs supernatural light of grace to ascertain that this or that truth is truly revealed.
      * This applies as well to the Church, who is guided by the Holy Ghost in declaring the truths of Faith and the authentic meaning of Scripture.
  + What is inspiration?
    - Fr Garrigou Lagrange page 70. It is not making known previously hidden knowledge. Rather, divine impulse to record certain facts, which may either be gathered from natural knowledge or revelation properly speaking.
      * Examples:
        + St Matthew writing about what he saw and heard.
        + Old Testament describing land given to each tribe after entering Holy Land.
    - Leo XIII: #20: For, by supernatural power, He so moved and impelled them to write — He was so present to them — that the things which He ordered, and those only, they, first, rightly understood, then willed faithfully to write down, and finally expressed in apt words and with infallible truth. Otherwise, it could not be said that He was the Author of the entire Scripture. Such has always been the persuasion of the Fathers. “Therefore,” says St. Augustine, “since they wrote the things which He showed and uttered to them, it cannot be pretended that He is not the writer; for His members executed what their Head dictated.”
* What are the sources of revelation?
  + What do we mean by source?
    - Origin = God, Jesus Christ, and prophets (including apostles)
    - Channels = Those media whereby the original revelation is communicated to other men and future generations
  + Originally, there is only one source of revelation: God’s illuminating action on the intellect of man, by means of which man’s intellect is impressed with ideas and concepts adequately representing supernatural realities.
    - E.g., prophecy, which deals with things far removed from man
    - beginning of Letter to Hebrews
      * Hebrews 1, 1-2: Multifariam, multisque modis olim Deus loquens patribus in prophetis:  2  novissime, diebus istis locutus est nobis in Filio, quem constituit hæredem universorum, per quem fecit et sæcula:
    - Our Lord: the HG will teach you all things
    - Pre-eminently Our Lord Jesus Christ
  + Then, these truths are handed over. Cf. St Paul: keep fast to the traditions, which you have learned by either: St Paul about keeping fast the traditions
    - 2 Thessalonians 2, 15Itaque fratres, state: et tenete traditiones, quas didicistis, sive per sermonem, sive per epistolam nostram.
    - By oral communication = tradition
      * Faith comes by hearing
    - By written communication = scripture
      * As an aside, Christ never wrote.
  + Vatican I
    - Now this supernatural revelation, according to the belief of the universal church, as declared by the sacred **council of Trent**, is contained in written books and unwritten traditions, which were received by the apostles from the lips of Christ himself, or came to the apostles by the dictation of the holy Spirit, and were passed on as it were from hand to hand until they reached us [16].
* Rules of Faith
  + What is understood here by “rule”?
    - It is the measure of what we must believe to be revealed by God.
    - It also determines the meaning of what we accept is revealed by God.
  + Rules of Faith
    - Remote
      * God Himself: Since [faith](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05752c.htm) is Divine and [infallible](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07790a.htm), the rule of faith must be also Divine and [infallible](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07790a.htm); and since [faith](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05752c.htm) is [supernatural](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14336b.htm) assent to Divine [truths](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm) upon Divine authority, the ultimate or remote rule of faith must be the truthfulness of [God](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm) in revealing Himself.
    - Proximate –
      * Scripture & Tradition
        + But since [Divine revelation](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13001a.htm) is contained in the written books and unwritten traditions ([Vatican Council](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15303a.htm), I, ii), the [Bible](https://www.newadvent.org/bible) and Divine tradition must be the rule of our [faith](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05752c.htm); since, however, these are only silent witnesses and cannot interpret themselves, they are commonly termed "proximate but inanimate rules of [faith](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05752c.htm)".
      * Magisterium of the Church
        + Quotes

Hence [St. Paul](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11567b.htm) calls the [Church](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03744a.htm) "the pillar and ground of the [truth](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm)" ([1 Timothy 3:15](https://www.newadvent.org/bible/1ti003.htm#vrs15); cf. [Mark 16:16](https://www.newadvent.org/bible/mar016.htm#vrs16); [Romans 10:17](https://www.newadvent.org/bible/rom010.htm#vrs17); [Acts 15:28](https://www.newadvent.org/bible/act015.htm#vrs28)).

St Ireneaus *Against the Heresies*: (III, iv), "it is not right to seek from others that [truth](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm) which it is easy to get from the [Church](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03744a.htm), since the Apostles poured into it in fullest measure, as into a rich treasury, all that belongs to the [truth](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm), so that whosoever desires may drink thence the draught of life". A little further on, he speaks (V, xx) of the "true and sound preaching of the [Church](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03744a.htm), which offers to the whole world one and the same way of [salvation](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13407a.htm)".

St Augustine: "I would not believe the Gospels unless the authority of the [Catholic](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03449a.htm) [Church](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03744a.htm) moved me thereto" (Contra Ep. Fund., V).

* + - * + Relation of Magisterium to Scripture

Magisterium is prior in authority to scripture

Existed beforehand.

St Peter began preaching on Pentecost.

Cf. beginning of Galatians. St Paul learned Gospel directly from Christ and preached it to Galatians. His letter was a response to them being misled by false apostles.

Question of judging authenticity of sacred writings

How do we know that this or that writing is in fact *inspired*?

All the apocryphal texts, such as Gospel of Peter or of James

Question of book of Mormon?

Testimony of Scripture itself

St John on fact that not everything OLJC revealed is contained in scripture

John 21, 24-5: Hic est discipulus ille qui testimonium perhibet de his, et scripsit hæc: et scimus quia verum est testimonium ejus.  25  Sunt autem et alia multa quæ fecit Jesus: quæ si scribantur per singula, nec ipsum arbitror mundum capere posse eos, qui scribendi sunt, libros.

Council of Trent session 4: which (Gospel), before promised through the prophets in the holy Scriptures, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, first promulgated with His own mouth, and then commanded to be preached by His Apostles to every creature, as the fountain of all, both saving truth, and moral discipline; and seeing clearly that this truth and discipline are contained in the written books, and the unwritten traditions which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ himself, or from the Apostles themselves, the Holy Ghost dictating, have come down even unto us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand; (the Synod) following the examples of the orthodox Fathers, receives and venerates with an equal affection of piety, and reverence, all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament--seeing that one God is the author of both --as also the said traditions, as well those appertaining to faith as to morals, as having been dictated, either by Christ's own word of mouth, or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church by a continuous succession

Vatican I: The complete books of the old and the new Testament with all their parts, as they are listed in the decree of the said council and as they are found in the old Latin Vulgate edition, **are to be** received as sacred and canonical. These books the church holds to be sacred and canonical not because she subsequently approved them by her authority after they had been composed by unaided human skill, nor simply because they contain revelation without error, but because, being written under the inspiration of the holy Spirit, they have God as their author,and were as such committed to the church.

Christ gave His disciples no command to write, but only to teach: "going therefore, teach ye all nations, . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" ([Matthew 28:19-20](https://www.newadvent.org/bible/mat028.htm#vrs19)). "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you" ([John 20:21](https://www.newadvent.org/bible/joh020.htm#vrs21)).

Question of establishing meaning

Scripture

St Peter about no private interpretation. Also, danger of trying to privately interpret

2 Peter 1, 20-21: hoc primum intelligentes quod omnis prophetia Scripturæ propria interpretatione non fit.  21Non enim voluntate humana allata est aliquando prophetia: sed Spiritu Sancto inspirati, locuti sunt sancti Dei homines.

2 Peter 3, 15-16: sicut et carissimus frater noster Paulus secundum datam sibi sapientiam scripsit vobis,  16  sicut et omnibus epistolis, loquens in eis de his in quibus sunt quædam difficilia intellectu, quæ indocti et instabiles depravant, sicut et ceteras Scripturas, ad suam ipsorum perditionem.

Council of Trent: Furthermore, in order to restrain petulant spirits, It decrees, that no one, relying on his own skill, shall,--in matters of faith, and of morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine, --wresting the sacred Scripture to his own senses, presume to interpret the said sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy mother Church,--whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the holy Scriptures,--hath held and doth hold; **[Page 20]** or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers; even though such interpretations were never (intended) to be at any time published.

Vatican I: Now since the decree on the interpretation of holy scripture, profitably made by the **council of Trent**, with the intention of constraining rash speculation, has been wrongly interpreted by some, we *renew* that decree and ***declare*** its meaning to be as follows: that in matters of faith and morals, belonging as they do to the establishing of christian doctrine, that meaning of holy scripture **must be held** to be the true one, which holy mother church held and holds, since it is her right to judge of the true meaning and interpretation of holy scripture. In consequence, it is **not permissible** for anyone to interpret holy scripture in a sense contrary to this, or indeed against the unanimous consent of the fathers

Leo XIII: On this head it must be observed that in addition to the usual reasons which make ancient writings more or less difficult to understand, there are some which are peculiar to the Bible. For the language of the Bible is employed to express, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, 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. . . Wherefore it must be recognized that the sacred writings are wrapt in a certain religious obscurity, and that no one can enter into their interior without a guide32; God so disposing, as the Holy Fathers commonly teach, in order that men may investigate them with greater ardor and earnestness, and that what is attained with difficulty may sink more deeply into the mind and heart; and, most of all, that they may understand that God has delivered the Holy Scriptures to the Church, and that in reading and making use of His Word, they must follow the Church as their guide and their teacher.

* + Fruits of “Private Interpretation”
    - Creates untold confusion
    - Vatican I: Indeed even the holy Bible itself, which they at one time claimed to be the sole source and judge of the christian faith, is no longer held to be divine, but they begin to assimilate it to the inventions of myth.
    - Leo XIII in *Providentissimus Deus*: Now, we have to meet the Rationalists, true children and inheritors of the older heretics, who, trusting in their turn to their own way of thinking, have rejected even the scraps and remnants of Christian belief which had been handed down to them. They deny that there is any such thing as revelation or inspiration, or Holy Scripture at all; they see, instead, only the forgeries and the falsehoods of men; they set down the Scripture narratives as stupid fables and Iying stories: the prophecies and the oracles of God are to them either predictions made up after the event or forecasts formed by the light of nature; the miracles and the wonders of God’s power are not what they are said to be, but the startling effects of natural law, or else mere tricks and myths; and the Apostolic Gospels and writings are not the work of the Apostles at all.
    - Cf. Maiminodes in Preface to *Guide to the Perplexed*: what happens when learned men come into contact with difficulties in scriptures?
* Conclusion
  + St Augustine

Vatican I on Revelation

1. Now since the decree on the interpretation of holy scripture, profitably made by the **council of Trent**, with the intention of constraining rash speculation, has been wrongly interpreted by some, we *renew* that decree and ***declare*** its meaning to be as follows: that
   * in matters of faith and morals,
   * belonging as they do to the establishing of christian doctrine,
   * that meaning of holy scripture **must be held** to be the true one,
   * which holy mother church held and holds,
     + since it is her right to judge of the true meaning and interpretation of holy scripture.
2. In consequence, it is **not permissible** for anyone to interpret holy scripture in a sense contrary to this, or indeed against the unanimous consent of the fathers.
   * + Council of Trent
       - Session 4
         * keeping this **[Page 18]** always in view, that, errors being removed, the purity itself of the Gospel be preserved in the Church;.
         * published.
     + Various positions
       - Quotes from Luther
       - Quotes from John Calvin
         * Institutes

. With great insult to the Holy Spirit, it is asked, who can assure us that the Scriptures proceeded from God; who guarantee that they have come down safe and unimpaired to our times; who persuade us that this book is to be received with reverence, and that one expunged from the list, did not the Church regulate all these things with certainty? On the determination of the Church, therefore, it is said, depend both the reverence which is due to Scripture, and the books which are to be admitted into the canon.

* + - * Quotes from modern Southern Baptists

Providentissimus Deus

#10:

#14:

#14: Wherefore the first and dearest object of the Catholic commentator should be to interpret those passages which have received an authentic interpretation either from the sacred writers themselves, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost (as in many places of the New Testament), or from the Church, under the assistance of the same Holy Spirit, whether by her solemn judgment or her ordinary and universal magisterium35 — to interpret these passages in that identical sense, and to prove, by all the resources of science, that sound hermeneutical laws admit of no other interpretation. In the other passages, the analogy of faith should be followed, and Catholic doctrine, as authoritatively proposed by the Church, should be held as the supreme law; for, seeing that the same God is the author both of the Sacred Books and of the doctrine committed to the Church, it is clearly impossible that any teaching can by legitimate means be extracted from the former, which shall in any respect be at variance with the latter. Hence it follows that all interpretation is foolish and false which either makes the sacred writers disagree one with another, or is opposed to the doctrine of the Church.

#14: The Holy Fathers “to whom, after the Apostles, the Church owes its growth — who have planted, watered, built, governed, and cherished it,”39 the Holy Fathers, We say, are of supreme authority, whenever they all interpret in one and the same manner any text of the Bible, as pertaining to the doctrine of faith or morals; for their unanimity clearly evinces that such interpretation has come down from the Apostles as a matter of Catholic faith.

#15: For although the studies of non-Catholics, used with prudence, may sometimes be of use to the Catholic student, he should, nevertheless, bear well in mind — as the Fathers also teach in numerous passages41 — that the sense of Holy Scripture can nowhere be found incorrupt out side of the Church, and cannot be expected to be found in writers who, being without the true faith, only gnaw the bark of the Sacred Scripture, and never attain its pith.

#17: but there is a second part of the subject of equal importance and equal difficulty — the maintenance in the strongest possible way of its full authority. This cannot be done completely or satisfactorily except by means of the living and proper magisterium of the Church.

#20: For all the books which the Church receives as sacred and canonical, are written wholly and entirely, with all their parts, at the dictation of the Holy Ghost; and so far is it from being possible that any error can co-exist with inspiration, that inspiration not only is essentially incompatible with error, but excludes and rejects it as absolutely and necessarily as it is impossible that God Himself, the supreme Truth, can utter that which is not true. This is the ancient and unchanging faith of the Church, solemnly defined in the Councils of Florence and of Trent, and finally confirmed and more expressly formulated by the Council of the Vatican.

#20: For, by supernatural power, He so moved and impelled them to write — He was so present to them — that the things which He ordered, and those only, they, first, rightly understood, then willed faithfully to write down, and finally expressed in apt words and with infallible truth. Otherwise, it could not be said that He was the Author of the entire Scripture. Such has always been the persuasion of the Fathers. “Therefore,” says St. Augustine, “since they wrote the things which He showed and uttered to them, it cannot be pretended that He is not the writer; for His members executed what their Head dictated.”