

Session 12: Divine Revelation

HYMN: Word of God, Come Down on
Earth



Word of God, come down on earth:
living rain from Heav'n descending.
Touch our hearts and bring to birth
faith and hope and love unending.
Word almighty, we revere You;
Word made Flesh, we long to hear
You.

Word eternal, throned on high,
Word that brought to life creation,
Word that came from Heav'n to die,
crucified for our salvation —
saving Word, the world restoring,
speak to us, Your word outpouring.

Word that caused blind eyes to see,
speak and heal our mortal blindness.
Deaf we are; our Healer be;
loose our tongues to tell Your
kindness.

Say the word, in pity spoken;
heal the world, by our sin broken.

Word that speak Your Father's love,
one with Him beyond all telling;
Word that sends us from above
God the Spirit, with us dwelling;
Word of truth, to all truth lead us;
Word of life, with one bread feed
us.

PRAYER: See Eph 1:17-19.
Let us pray: O God,
grant us a spirit
of wisdom and insight
to know You clearly.
Enlighten our innermost vision,
that we may know the great hope
to which You have called us,
the wealth of Your glorious heritage
to be distributed
among the members of the Church,
and the immeasurable scope
of Your power
in us who believe.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ,
Your Son,
Who lives and reigns with You
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
— Amen

READING:

Jn 17:6-8

The Lord be with you.

— *And with your spirit*

A Reading from the holy Gospel
according to John

— *Glory to You, O Lord*

Jesus raised His eyes to Heaven
and said,

"Father, I revealed Your name
to those whom You gave Me
out of the world.

They belonged to You,
and You gave them to Me,
and they have kept Your word.

"Now they know
that everything You gave Me
is from You,
because the words You gave to Me
I have given to them,
and they accepted them
and truly understood
that I came from You,
and they have believed
that You sent Me."

The Gospel of the Lord

— *Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ*

IN BRIEF: WHAT THE CHURCH TEACHES

Many things about God are
mysteries,
by which we mean truths
that are above or beyond reason,
but have been revealed by God.

How do we know
what God has revealed?
The answer is by the testimony,
teaching, and authority
of the Catholic Church.

The Church holds
the doctrines and traditions
of the apostles; and,
through the unbroken succession
of her pastors,
she derives her powers
and her mission from them. —

Session 12

Jesus Christ
gave her divine authority to teach
when He said to His apostles,
"Go and teach all nations."

BIBLE READING

Ps 39-74

This coming week
you will continue reading the Psalms
as we prepare for next week's topic:
"God: Unity and Trinity."

Again, the Psalms express
what we want to say:
"There is none like You
among the gods, O Lord,
and there are no works like Yours."

And again,
"From everlasting to everlasting
You are God."

Divine Revelation

Introduction

God provides us "with constant evidence of Himself in created realities."¹ As we have seen in the last two sessions, both the physical universe and the human person bear witness² that there exists a Reality outside the universe "Who watches over and controls the world by His providence"³ and is the Author of the laws we find "written in our hearts":⁴ a Reality "that everyone calls 'God.'"⁵

However, in order for us "to be able to enter into real intimacy with Him,"⁶ God has also revealed Himself to us in more direct ways. "There is another order of knowledge," which we cannot possibly arrive at by our own powers: "the order of divine Revelation"⁷ (often distinguished from ordinary revelation by a capital letter.)

In this talk, we will see how God has revealed Himself by *words* and *actions*⁸ so that we can know Him and love Him "far beyond" our "natural capacity."⁹

'Divine pedagogy'¹⁰

From the beginning, as we have seen,¹¹ God "manifested Himself" to Adam and Eve, inviting them into "intimate communion" with Him.¹² And this Revelation "was not broken off" by their sin.¹³ The Church's Fourth Eucharistic Prayer says it all.¹⁴

"We give You praise, Father most holy, for You are great, and You have fashioned all Your works in wisdom and in love. You formed man in Your own image and entrusted the whole world to his care, so that in serving You alone, the Creator, he might have dominion over all creatures.

"And when through disobedience he had lost Your friendship, You did not abandon him to the domain of death. For You came in mercy to the aid of all, so that those who seek might find You. Time and again You offered them covenants and through the prophets taught them to look forward to salvation.

"And You so loved the world, Father most holy, that in the fullness of time You sent Your only begotten Son to be our Saviour. Made incarnate by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, He shared our human nature in all things but sin. To the poor He proclaimed the good news of salvation, to prisoners, freedom, and to the sorrowful of heart, joy.

"To accomplish Your plan, He gave Himself up to death, and, rising from the dead, He destroyed death and restored life. And that we might live no longer for ourselves but for Him Who died and rose again for us, He sent the Holy Spirit from You, Father, as the first fruits for those who believe, so that, bringing to perfection His work in the world, He might sanctify creation to the full."

God's final word

To summarize: "In times past, God spoke in fragmentary and varied ways to our fathers through the prophets. In this, the final age, He has spoken to us through His Son, Whom He has made Heir of all things and through Whom He first

1 CCC 54

2 They do not *prove* the existence of God as logic proves the angles of a triangle to add up to 180° or experiment proves the world to be round. They are more like the proofs presented in a courtroom: converging arguments which lead us to certainty about the truth. For the arguments that eventually convinced the reluctant C.S. Lewis, see *Surprised By Joy*; *Miracles*, II-VI; *The Problem of Pain*, I-III; and *Mere Christianity*, Book I, 4-5, and Book II, 1-2.

3 See the talk on "A Place for Science in the Catholic Faith."

4 See the talk on "The Contradictions of Atheism."

5 See CCC 31-34.

6 CCC 35

7 See CCC 50.

8 See CCC 53.

9 See CCC 52.

10 See CCC 53.

11 See the talk on "Creation and the Fall."

12 See CCC 54.

13 See CCC 55.

14 See the talk on "The History of our Salvation."

created the universe. This Son is the reflection of the Father's glory, the exact representation of the Father's being."¹⁵

With Christ, then, God's Self-Revelation is complete. God has no more to tell us. What He revealed partially and gradually through the prophets, He has revealed fully, all at once, in His Son.¹⁶ In fact, we often call Christ God's *Word*.¹⁷

The Church uses the term "public Revelation" to mean "the revealing action of God directed to humanity as a whole," the "single Revelation of God addressed to all peoples." Public Revelation, then, "came to completion with Christ."¹⁸

Accordingly, "no new public revelation is to be expected" before the end of the world. Christians cannot accept anything — like the *Koran*,¹⁹ the *Book of Mormon*,²⁰ or "New Age"²¹ — that purports to "surpass or correct" the Revelation of God that was completed in Christ.²² In fact, any Christian who seeks further revelation is "guilty not only of foolish behaviour, but also of offending [God]," in "not fixing his eyes entirely upon Christ," but desiring "some other novelty."²³

'Private' revelations²⁴

It is true that "throughout the ages, there have been so-called 'private' revelations, some of which have been recognized by the authority of the Church."²⁵ However, their role is not "to improve or complete Christ's definitive Revelation, but to help [us] live more fully by it" at a particular point in history.²⁶ In fact, a "private revelation shows its credibility" precisely by leading us back to public Revelation.²⁷

In "approving" a private revelation, the Church confirms that "the revelation contains nothing contrary to faith or morals," declares it "lawful" to publicize the revelation, and authorizes us "to accept the revelation with prudence."²⁸

Public Revelation demands "the assent of Catholic faith" — a "personal adherence to God and assent to His truth"²⁹ — which is "different from any other human faith, trust, or opinion."³⁰ Public Revelation is all we quote in this course.

"It would be futile and false to place such faith"³¹ in anyone less than God. In fact, "it is not even possible" to assent to a private revelation with such certitude, even to one the Church has "approved." Private revelations "seek rather an assent of human faith in keeping with the requirements of prudence." They differ from public Revelation, therefore, "not only in degree, but also in essence."³²

Jesus revealed God

Jesus said that "no one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father but the Son — and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal Him."³³

For about two years, Jesus did reveal God by His words, actions, and way of life,³⁴ principally to His twelve apostles.³⁵ "To you has been given a knowledge of

15 Heb 1:1-3

16 See CCC 65.

17 Jn 1:1-14. See the talk on "God: Unity and Trinity."

18 Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI): *The Message of Fatima* (see the talk on "God's Will," Appendix 3).

19 Which Mohammed claimed to have received from the Angel Gabriel over 20 years in the sixth century AD.

20 Which Joseph Smith claimed to have received from the Angel Moroni in the early nineteenth century.

21 See the talk on "The First Three Commandments," Appendix 4.

22 See CCC 66-67.

23 CCC 65

24 See the talk on "God's Will," Appendices 3-5.

25 For example, the revelations to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque 1673-75, to St. Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes in 1858, to St. Maria Faustina Kowalska in the 1930's, and to Lucia dos Santos and Sts. Francisco and Jacinta Marto at Fatima in 1917.

26 See CCC 67.

27 Joseph Ratzinger: *The Message of Fatima* (see the talk on "God's Will," Appendix 3).

28 Joseph Ratzinger: *The Message of Fatima* (see the talk on "God's Will," Appendix 3).

29 CCC 150

30 Joseph Ratzinger: *The Message of Fatima* (see the talk on "God's Will," Appendix 3).

31 CCC 150

32 Joseph Ratzinger: *The Message of Fatima* (see the talk on "God's Will," Appendix 3).

33 Mt 11:27

34 See CCC 76.

35 Those He chose as His collaborators (see Mt 10:2-4; Mk 3:13-10; Lk 6:12-16; Jn 1:35-49).

the mysteries of the reign of God," He told them, "but it has not been given to the others."³⁶

To the crowds, Jesus spoke in parables: short stories based on familiar life experiences, which He used to teach spiritual lessons.³⁷

"I use parables when I speak to them because they look but do not see, they listen but do not hear or understand,"³⁸ He explained to His apostles. "But blest are your eyes because they see and blest are your ears because they hear."³⁹

"This much I have told you while I was still with you,"⁴⁰ He said to them the night before He died. "I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now."⁴¹ However, He said that the Holy Spirit would guide them "to all truth."⁴²

"When the Paraclete⁴³ comes, the Spirit of truth Who comes from the Father — and Whom I Myself will send from the Father — He will bear witness on My behalf," He said. "You must bear witness as well, for you have been with Me from the beginning."⁴⁴

Apostles handed it on

Jesus repeated this command just before He ascended to His Father: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news [the Gospel⁴⁵] to all creation."⁴⁶ Obediently, the apostles passed on "what they themselves had received," both from Christ's words, actions, and way of life and "at the prompting of the Holy Spirit."⁴⁷

They did it "in two ways." First, they taught it by their preaching, their example, and the institutions they established.⁴⁸ Second, some of them, and others associated with them, recorded it *in writing*.⁴⁹

Moreover, to ensure that "the full and living Gospel might always be preserved in the Church," they "left bishops as their successors," giving them "their own positions of teaching authority," so that what they had handed on would be "preserved in a continuous line of succession until the end of time."⁵⁰ For example, Paul, after ordaining Timothy,⁵¹ wrote to him, "Guard what has been committed to you";⁵² "guard the rich deposit of faith with the help of the Holy Spirit Who dwells within us";⁵³ and "never be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord."⁵⁴

Sacred Tradition

The Church uses the term *Sacred Tradition* to mean the "living transmission" of God's Revelation by the apostles and their successors.⁵⁵

This is how the apostles first handed on what God had revealed to them, even before any of it was written down. For example, Paul said to the Romans, "I have written to you rather boldly in parts of this letter by way of reminder."⁵⁶

And this "living transmission" has continued ever since, through the bishops⁵⁷

36 Mt 13:11

37 See John Hardon: *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, "Parables."

38 Mt 13:13

39 Mt 13:16

40 Jn 14:25

41 Jn 16:12

42 Jn 16:13

43 From the Greek *parakletos* ("advocate").

44 Jn 16:26-27; see Acts 1:8.

45 From the Anglo-Saxon *g dspe1* ("a good tale"). "Gospel" and "good news" are used to translate the Greek *evangelion* and the Latin *evangelium*.

46 Mk 16:15. See CCC 74.

47 CCC 76

48 See the talk on "What is the Catholic Church?"

49 See CCC 76.

50 See CCC 77 and the talk on "What is the Catholic Church?"

51 See 2 Tim 1:6; 1 Tim 4:14.

52 1 Tim 6:20

53 2 Tim 2:14

54 2 Tim 1:8

55 See CCC 78.

56 Rom 15:15. For numerous other examples, see Appendix 2.

57 See the talk on "What is the Catholic Church?"

appointed by the apostles and then by their successors, right down to Archbishop Michael Miller CSB of Vancouver.⁵⁸

Sacred Tradition is not the same as ordinary tradition. (Notice the capital letter.) For example, Sacred Tradition does not mean "the various theological, disciplinary, liturgical, or devotional traditions" that have developed locally over time.⁵⁹

Nor does it mean stagnation, stultification, hard-and-fast out-of-date rules applied without understanding or knowledge of their source. For example, in *Fiddler on the Roof*, Tevye says, "We always keep our heads covered.... You may ask, how did this tradition start? I'll tell you." He thinks for a moment, raises his hands resignedly, and says simply, "I don't know. But it's a tradition."⁶⁰

Nor is Sacred Tradition subject to the changes, errors, additions, deletions, and omissions that frequently distort ordinary tradition.⁶¹

Sacred Tradition is different. First, it goes back to the apostles: the ones who actually heard what Christ said, in their own language, against the background of their own laws, customs, and environment. Second, it is guarded by God the Holy Spirit, as Christ promised.⁶²

Accordingly, Sacred Tradition transmits divine Revelation "in its entirety" to today's bishops, so that "they may faithfully preserve, expound, and spread it abroad by their teaching."⁶³ Thus it ensures that the Church, "in her doctrine, life, and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is" and "all that she believes."⁶⁴

Through Sacred Tradition, God the Father's "Self-communication" remains "living and effective."⁶⁵ Made once for all "in the past" by Christ, Who is God the Son, and guarded for all time by God the Holy Spirit, it "remains present and active in the Church." Through Sacred Tradition, "the living voice of the Gospel rings out" in her, and, "through her, in the world."⁶⁶

Sacred Scripture

God's Revelation, then, was first handed on by the apostles *orally*, as we have described. However, some of the apostles, and others associated with them,⁶⁷ also recorded it — or at least part of it⁶⁸ — *in writing*. We call what was written down, *Sacred Scripture*.⁶⁹ "Sacred Scripture is the speech of God" as it has been "put down in writing"⁷⁰ under the breath" — or *inspiration*⁷¹ — "of the Holy Spirit."⁷² In fact, "Scripture" has come to mean *Sacred Scripture* almost exclusively.

The Church collected the 73 books of Sacred Scripture into what we call today "the Bible."⁷³ They include Jewish history, wisdom literature, prophecy, the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and various letters, mostly from St. Paul.⁷⁴ The first 46 books make up what we call the Old Testament, telling of events before Jesus, and the last 27 the New Testament, telling of Jesus and events afterward.⁷⁵

58 For the nature of bishops' authority, see the talk on "What is the Catholic Church?"

59 See CCC 83.

60 Joseph Stein: *Fiddler on the Roof*, Prologue

61 As we see in the continual re-interpretation of the American Constitution by the Supreme Court; see Antonin Scalia: *A Matter of Interpretation*.

62 See Jn 14:24-26. Also see the talk on "What is the Catholic Church?"

63 CCC 81

64 See CCC 78.

65 Heb 4:12

66 See CCC 79.

67 Matthew and John were apostles; Mark was associated with Peter; and Luke was associated with Paul.

68 "There are still many other things that Jesus did, yet if they were written about in detail, I doubt there would be room enough in the entire world to hold the books to record them" (Jn 21:25).

69 From the Latin *scriptum* ("written"). See CCC 76.

70 The original French is "en tant que ... elle est consignée par écrit": i.e., "as it has been consigned by writing," not (as the usual English translation might suggest) "as it is being put down in writing."

71 Compare our words "respiration" and "expire."

72 CCC 81

73 From the Greek *biblia* ("books").

74 See the "Introduction" to this course: "Reading the Bible."

75 See the "Introduction" to this course: "Reading the Bible."

Old Testament

The books of the Old Testament recount how God, through His "old" covenants, chose the Israelites for His own people.⁷⁶ He revealed Himself to them in words and actions as the one, true, and living God and He spoke to them through the prophets, teaching them His ways and preparing them for the coming of Christ.⁷⁷

Accordingly, the books of the Old Testament, "even though they contain matters imperfect and provisional,"⁷⁸ comprise "authentic divine teaching."⁷⁹ They express a sense of God; they contain sound wisdom and a great treasury of prayers; and they embody the history of our salvation, although often in a hidden way.⁸⁰

The Old Testament, therefore, "is an indispensable part of Sacred Scripture."⁸¹ The Church reads it in the light of what she knows about Christ,⁸² but it retains its own intrinsic value as God's Revelation, reaffirmed by our Lord Himself.⁸³

The Church has always opposed the idea of rejecting the Old Testament, as if the New Testament has superseded it.⁸⁴ Its books have "permanent value," for the Old Covenant between God and His people Israel has never been revoked.⁸⁵ In fact, St. Paul said, "God's gifts and His call are irrevocable."⁸⁶ To the Israelites belonged "the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the lawgiving, the worship, and the promises; theirs were the patriarchs, and from them came the Messiah."⁸⁷

New Testament

The books of the New Testament are concerned with God's "new and eternal covenant" with the whole of humanity.⁸⁸

The *Gospels*, "whose historicity" the Church "unhesitatingly affirms," are "the heart" of all Sacred Scripture. They "faithfully hand on what Jesus did and taught:"⁸⁹ how He established the Kingdom of God on earth; revealed God the Father by His words and actions; completed His work by His death, Resurrection, and Ascension; founded His Church; and promised us His Holy Spirit.⁹⁰

Starting with Pentecost, just 10 days after Christ's Ascension,⁹¹ "the apostles handed on to their hearers what He had said and done,"⁹² with that "fuller understanding" which they now enjoyed⁹³ through instruction by Christ⁹⁴ and enlightenment by the Holy Spirit.⁹⁵

Later — roughly 40-65 AD⁹⁶ — the evangelists⁹⁷ wrote the Gospels, considering what "had been handed on, either orally or already in written form"; selecting, synthesizing, and explaining "with an eye to the current situation of the churches" — what we would now call *dioceses*. They wrote in the form of preaching, but in such a fashion that they told us the honest truth about Jesus.⁹⁸ Whether they relied on

76 In fact, "Testament" means "Covenant."

77 See CCC 54-64.

78 CCC 122

79 Vatican II: *Dei Verbum*, 15

80 See CCC 122.

81 CCC 121

82 See CCC 129.

83 See the talk on "Who is Jesus Christ?" Appendix

84 See CCC 123.

85 See CCC 121.

86 Rom 11:29

87 Rom 9:4-5

88 See Eucharistic Prayer 1.

89 See CCC 125-126.

90 See Vatican II: *Dei Verbum*, 17.

91 See the talk on "The History of Our Salvation."

92 See Acts 2.

93 See Vatican II: *Dei Verbum*, 19.

94 "In the time after His suffering He showed them in many convincing ways that He was alive, appearing to them over the course of forty days and speaking to them about the reign of God" (Acts 1:3).

95 See Jn 14:26, 16:13.

96 See the talk on "Who is Jesus Christ?"

97 The writers of the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; from the Greek *eu* ("good") plus *angelos* ("messenger").

98 See CCC 126.

their own memories or on the testimony of those who had been "eyewitnesses and ministers" of God's Revelation "from the beginning," their purpose was to record the "truth"⁹⁹ about the things of which they had been informed.¹⁰⁰

The other books of the New Testament, all "composed under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit," "firmly establish" matters concerning Christ, "formulate" His "authentic teaching" more "precisely," proclaim "the saving power" of His work, and foretell its "consummation."¹⁰¹

Typology

From the beginning, the Church has "illuminated" the unity of God's plan in the two Testaments, or Covenants,¹⁰² through what Scripture scholars call *typology*.¹⁰³

In Biblical language, a "type" is a person, thing, action, or event that "prefigures" or "foreshadows" new and greater truths, actions, or events.¹⁰⁴

For example, Jonah — a prophet of the eighth century BC, who willingly gave up his life for others;¹⁰⁵ "remained in the belly" of a large fish, dead,¹⁰⁶ for "three days and three nights";¹⁰⁷ was raised from the dead;¹⁰⁸ and then converted the Gentiles of Nineveh¹⁰⁹ — is a "type" of Christ,¹¹⁰ Who said that He had come "to give His own life as a ransom for the many";¹¹¹ spent "three days and three nights in the bowels of the earth";¹¹² was raised from the dead;¹¹³ and then converted the Roman Empire.¹¹⁴ The Israelites' escape from Egypt through the Red Sea¹¹⁵ is a "type" of our escape from Satan through the baptismal water.¹¹⁶

In the Old Covenant, the Church sees types of what God accomplished in the New; the New Testament must be "read in the light of the Old." In fact, early Christian teaching "made constant use of the Old Testament."¹¹⁷

"As an old saying put it, the New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New."¹¹⁸

Tradition and Scripture

Tradition and Scripture "are bound closely together,"¹¹⁹ for Tradition is the "living transmission"¹²⁰ — by the Church's bishops — of God's Revelation, first "entrusted to the apostles by Christ and the Holy Spirit," while Scripture "is the speech of God" as it has been "put down in writing under the breath of the Holy Spirit."¹²¹

The Church accepts and honours Tradition and Scripture "with equal feelings of devotion and reverence,"¹²² for they make up "a single sacred deposit" of

99 See Lk 1:1-4.

100 Vatican II: *Dei Verbum*, 19

101 Vatican II: *Dei Verbum*, 19

102 See CCC 128.

103 See CCC 130 and Appendix 3.

104 In ordinary English, this meaning survives in "prototype" and "archetype": the original in relation to any copy, imitation, representation, later specimen, improved form, etc."

105 See Jon 1:12-15.

106 See Jon 2:3,7.

107 See Jon 2:1-2.

108 See Jon 2:3,7.

109 See Jon 3:1-10.

110 See Mt 12:39-41.

111 Mt 20:28

112 See Mt 12:40-41.

113 See Mk 16:6.

114 See Brant Pitre: *The Case for Jesus*, 12. Another "type" of Christ is Melchizedek, a "priest of God most high" who offered Abram bread and wine (see Gn 14:18-20; Ps 110:4; Heb 5:6-10; 6:20-7:21).

115 See Ex 12-14.

116 See John Hardon: *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, "Types, Scriptural."

117 See CCC 129 and Appendix 3.

118 CCC 129

119 CCC 80

120 CCC 78

121 CCC 81

122 CCC 82

Revelation.¹²³ Accordingly, she "does not draw her certainty about all revealed truth" from Sacred Scripture alone;¹²⁴ she also relies on Sacred Tradition.

"Christian faith," therefore, "is not a religion of the book": that is, not "a written and mute word, but incarnate and living."¹²⁵

* * * * *

The Church's Magisterium

The Holy Spirit has entrusted the task of authentically interpreting Revelation, whether Tradition or Scripture, to the Church,¹²⁶ which He guards from error.¹²⁷

In practice, "this means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome."¹²⁸ We call the Church's teaching authority her *magisterium*.¹²⁹

Tradition, Scripture, and the Church's magisterium "are so connected and associated" that none of them can stand without the others.¹³⁰ "Working together, each in its own way, under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls."¹³¹

In interpreting Revelation, the Church acts "in the name of Jesus Christ."¹³² She is not "superior" to Revelation, "but is its servant." She "teaches only what has been handed on" to her from the apostles. At God's command, "and with the help of the Holy Spirit," she "listens" to it "devotedly, guards it with dedication, and expounds it faithfully." All that she proposes for belief "as being divinely revealed" is drawn from the one deposit of faith.¹³³

In brief, then, "we believe all that is contained in the word of God, written or handed down, which the Church proposes for belief as divinely revealed."¹³⁴

Development of doctrine

However, the unity, or integrity,¹³⁵ of divine Revelation is "the unity of a living body."¹³⁶ And a body *grows*. Accordingly, "the Tradition that comes from the apostles makes progress in the Church"; "there is a growth in insight into the realities and words that are being passed on."¹³⁷

Notice: there is *growth*, as when an acorn becomes an oak;¹³⁸ not *change*, as if an acorn became an elm.¹³⁹ Growth occurs "with the help of the Holy Spirit,"¹⁴⁰

123 Vatican II: *Dei Verbum*, 10

124 See CCC 82. Also see Appendices 1 and 2.

125 See CCC 108.

126 See CCC 85.

127 See the talk on "What is the Catholic Church?"

128 CCC 85

129 From the Latin *magister* ("teacher"). See the talk on "What is the Catholic Church?"

130 See Appendix 1 and the talk on "Divisions Among Christians."

131 CCC 95

132 CCC 85

133 See CCC 86.

134 Pope Paul VI: *Credo of the People of God*, 20 (see CCC 182).

135 "Wholeness."

136 See Pope Francis: *Lumen Fidei*, 48. "This is what St. John Henry Newman expressed when he said that the power of doctrine to assimilate everything, purifying it and giving it its finest expression no matter what the time or culture, is one of the distinguishing marks of its truth" (see Newman: *Development of Christian Doctrine*, Part II, Chapter 5, Section 3, and Chapter 8, 1).

137 Vatican II: *Dei Verbum*, 8

138 For example: in *Casti Connubii* (1930), Pope Pius XI said that conjugal love "must have as its primary purpose" the mutual "forming and perfecting" of spouses in their spiritual life (23-24). However, he said, "the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children" (54), although "there are also secondary ends, such as mutual aid, the cultivating of mutual love, and the quieting of concupiscence" (59). However, in *Humanae Vitae* (1968), Pope Paul VI spoke of "the inseparable connection, willed by God and unable to be broken by man on his own initiative, between the two meanings of the conjugal act": "unitive" and "procreative." He explained: "By its intimate structure, the conjugal act, while most closely uniting husband and wife, capacitates them for the generation of new lives, according to laws inscribed in the very being of man and of woman. By safeguarding both these essential aspects, the unitive and the procreative, the conjugal act preserves in its fullness the sense of true mutual love and its ordination towards man's most high calling to parenthood" (12).

139 For example: until 1930, every Christian church cited the Bible (see Gn 1:28, 38:6-11) to condemn artificial contraception as sinful. At its 1920 Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Communion gave "an emphatic warning against the use of unnatural means for the avoidance of conception, together with the

Who instructs the Church in everything¹⁴¹ and guides her to all truth,¹⁴² as Christ promised. It is as if God, Who spoke, once for all, in Christ, continues to "converse" with the Church,¹⁴³ whom St. Paul called Christ's Spouse.¹⁴⁴

The Church grows in her understanding of divine Revelation in three ways:

- through "contemplation and study" by believers.¹⁴⁵
- "from the intimate sense of spiritual realities" that "believers experience."
- from the preaching of the bishops, to whom God has given "the sure charism"¹⁴⁶ of truth.¹⁴⁷

"Thus, as the centuries go by, the Church is always advancing toward the fullness of divine truth."¹⁴⁸

Human and divine

Already, in this course, we have seen that the divine and the human "coinhere": that God and His creation can each "let the other be even as they enter into the closest contact."¹⁴⁹ For example, we have seen that

- God is the first Cause of everything, but normally He operates in and through secondary causes in predictable ways.¹⁵⁰
- Christ is one Person, but He is fully human and fully divine.¹⁵¹
- the Catholic Church is preserved from error in faith and morals, but her members are sinful human beings.¹⁵²

No question about it: these are great mysteries! as Paul wrote to Timothy.¹⁵³

Now we see another example. On the one hand, "God is the Author of Sacred Scripture"¹⁵⁴ in the sense that He "inspired the human authors of the sacred books." On the other hand, "while He employed them in this task," they "made full use of their own faculties and powers." They were not just secretaries, copying down what God dictated. God "acted in them and by them," but "it was as true authors that they wrote whatever He wanted written, and no more."¹⁵⁵

grave dangers — physical, moral, and religious — thereby incurred," and it "steadfastly" upheld "the paramount importance in married life of deliberate and thoughtful self-control" (Resolution 68).

However, the Lambeth Conference of 1930 ruled "that other methods may be used" in cases "where there is a clearly felt moral obligation to limit or avoid parenthood" (Resolution 15).

140 Vatican II: *Dei Verbum*, 8

141 See Jn 14:26.

142 Jn 16:13

143 See CCC 79.

144 Eph 5:22-32

145 See Lk 2:19,51.

146 A gift from God to an individual for the spiritual welfare of the Church (see 1 Cor 12:1-14,40); from the Greek *kharisma* ("favour," "divine gift"), from *kharis* ("grace," "favour").

147 See CCC 94 and the talk on "What is the Catholic Church?"

148 Vatican II: *Dei Verbum*, 8. A current example is the Church's understanding of capital punishment: something that was once allowed in cases of sufficient gravity, but is now absolutely forbidden (see CCC 2266-2267). Another is salvation for the unbaptized (see the talk on "Baptism and Confirmation" and the International Theological Commission: *The Hope of Salvation for Infants Who Die Without Being Baptized*, written and approved by Pope Benedict XVI January 19 2007.

149 "The proximity of God is not a threat to a creature, but, on the contrary, that which allows the creature to be most fully itself. If a fellow-creature were to enter into the very constitution of my being, I would be the victim of an aggression, and my freedom and integrity would be undermined. But the true God can enter into the most intimate ontological unity with a creature, and the result is not diminution but enhancement of creaturely being" (Robert Barron: *The Priority of Christ*, 3).

150 See the talk on "A Place for Science in the Catholic Faith."

151 See the talk on "Who is Jesus Christ?"

152 See the talk on "What is the Catholic Faith?"

153 See 1 Tim 3:16, about which (in his translation of the Bible), Ronald Knox commented: "This sentence is perhaps best divided into three paradoxes: Christ manifested to the world in His humanity, yet redeeming us through the dignity of His divine Person; the resurrection, a sight witnessed only by angels, yet published throughout the world; Christ still making His power felt here below, through the faith of His Church, although He has ascended into Heaven."

154 See CCC 105.

155 See CCC 106. Similarly, in *propheticism* — "the special charism which God imparts to certain individuals" which "empowers them to be spokespersons of His Revelation" — "the prophet's gifts and character are not bypassed: they provide the vehicle by which God's word is communicated. But the substance of the message is of divine origin. Thus, it is in connection with the charism of propheticism that the divine inspiration of the human authors of the Scriptures is to be understood." However, "with the conclusion of the apostolic Revelation, manifestations of prophetic gifts must be judged with reference to

It seems that *God wrote it* and *men wrote it* can both be true,¹⁵⁶ "though we have no way of understanding *how* this is possible."¹⁵⁷

As we trace the human development of the *canon*, or official Church catalogue, of the New Testament, then, we must keep in mind that "God is the Author of Sacred Scripture."¹⁵⁸

Development of the canon¹⁵⁹

At the time of the apostles, there was no complete and clear-cut canon of New Testament writings. Not until some time between 170 and 220 AD were New Testament writings placed on the same footing as the Old. The canon of the New Testament, like that of the Old, developed gradually, stimulated by disputes and hindered by obscurities.

From Pentecost¹⁶⁰ on, any writing that was guaranteed to have come from an apostle must have been especially venerated, and copies must have been eagerly sought by all the dioceses.

In fact, there is evidence that apostolic writings were being circulated. For example, Peter says, "Paul, our beloved brother, wrote you this in the spirit of wisdom that is his, dealing with these matters as he does in all his letters."¹⁶¹ John evidently knew that Matthew, Mark, and Luke had all described Christ's institution of the Eucharist, or he would surely not have left it out of his own Gospel.

However, there is no evidence of a systematic plan for distributing the apostles' writings, or of any definite canon authorized by the apostles, or even of any awareness of divine inspiration. Nearly all the contents of the New Testament were written for particular occasions, or addressed to particular destinations.

Nevertheless, we may presume that the leading dioceses — Antioch, Thessalonica, Alexandria, Corinth, Rome — exchanged the apostles' writings with one another and authorized the public reading of any which they acquired. Doubtless, this was how the collections grew and reached completeness (within certain limits), but it must have taken some years, even after the last book was written, for all the widely separated dioceses to acquire the new sacred literature in full.

Actually, the lack of a fixed canon and organized distribution left room for variations and doubts that lasted for centuries. The idea of a new body of sacred writings seems to have become clearer as people learned more of the faith *orally*.

Nevertheless, a few years after the death of the last apostle, John, about 100 AD, two well defined bodies of new sacred writings existed: the *Evangelium*, comprising the Four Gospels, and the *Apostolicum*, comprising thirteen letters from Paul. These became the firm and universal nucleus of the complete canon.

Between about 220 and 367 AD, the Church seemed to become conscious of variations in the diocesan collections of sacred writings, and debates about what ought to be included in the canon continued until 405 AD. However, by about 410 AD, the canon was definitely fixed for the Church as a whole, and discussion ceased.

Officially, the canon of both Testaments¹⁶² was set out at the Council of Rome in 382 AD under Pope Damasus. It was reaffirmed at the Council of Hippo in 383 AD; the Council of Carthage in 393, 397, and 419 AD; the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 AD; the Council of Florence in 1442; the Council of Trent in 1546; the First Vatican Council in 1870; and the Second Vatican Council in 1965.

Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium" (*Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Encyclopedia*). See the talk on "Catholic Spiritualities."

156 See Appendix 4.

157 Robert Barron: *The Priority of Christ*, 12.

158 See CCC 105 and Appendix 4.

159 See the *Catholic Encyclopedia: The Canon of the New Testament*

160 See the talk on "The History of Our Salvation."

161 2 Pet 3:15-16

162 See the talk on "Reading the Bible" for the whole canon.

Tradition the criterion

How did Church authorities decide, in those early years, what should be included in the New Testament canon?

Historians and theologians are divided on this point. Some think that only writings by an apostle would have been accepted. Others point out that Mark's Gospel, Luke's Gospel, and the Acts of the Apostles, which were not written by apostles, were accepted, while the so-called Epistle of Barnabas,¹⁶³ the Apocalypse of Peter,¹⁶⁴ and the Gospel of James¹⁶⁵ were not.

For the most part, theologians hold that Church authorities, aware of the Church's duty as custodian of God's Revelation, used *agreement with Tradition* as the criterion.

The Church maintains that it is through Sacred Tradition that she knows "the full canon" of "the sacred books." It is through Sacred Tradition that she understands Scripture more and more thoroughly.¹⁶⁶

And it is through her magisterium that we, her members, accept the Bible's 73 books as sacred — regardless of how, from a human point of view, each one came to be written and included in the canon while other writings were excluded.¹⁶⁷

As St. Augustine said, "I would not believe in the Gospel, had not the authority of the Catholic Church already moved me."¹⁶⁸

Reading Sacred Scripture

Because the Sacred Books were inspired by God, we must regard everything they affirm "as affirmed by the Holy Spirit." We must acknowledge that they teach "firmly, faithfully, and without error" those truths which God, "for the sake of our salvation," wished to see written down.¹⁶⁹

However, as history shows,¹⁷⁰ not all of us see the same truths when we read Sacred Scripture. How *ought* we to read it?

Literal sense

First, we must carefully search out what the human authors of the Sacred Books had in mind when they wrote.

For example, we must consider the *literary forms* they used, for truth is presented and expressed in different ways in the prophetic books, in the poetical texts, and in the various historical books.¹⁷¹

We must consider the circumstances of each writer's time and culture: "the customary and characteristic patterns of perception, speech, and narrative" that prevailed when he wrote and "the conventions which the people of his time followed in their dealings with one another."¹⁷² We must do so not to discredit anything he said, but to search out what he "intended to express and did in fact express."¹⁷³

This is beyond most of us. It is the job, principally, of Scripture scholars,¹⁷⁴ who study the relevant languages, theology, history, and archaeology. The rest of us can

163 Written between 70 AD and 132 AD. Barnabas is called an "apostle" in Acts 14:14.

164 Written between 100 AD and 150 AD.

165 Written about 145 AD.

166 See Vatican II: *Dei Verbum*, 8.

167 The human history of the canon's development, studied by Scripture scholars with great profit to us all (see Pope Pius XII: *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, 33), should not diminish our faith in the Bible (see Pope Pius XII: *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, 1), any more than the history of the various influences on Shakespeare's writing should diminish our delight in his plays and poetry.

168 CCC 119

169 See CCC 107.

170 See the talk on "Divisions Among Christians."

171 See CCC 110 and the "Introduction" to this course: "Reading the Bible."

172 See Vatican II: *Dei Verbum*, 12.

173 For example, the Bible "speaks to us of the origin of the universe and its make-up not in order to provide us with a scientific treatise, but in order to state the correct relationships of man with God and with the universe.... Any other teaching about the origin and makeup of the universe is alien to the intentions of the Bible" (Pope John Paul II: Address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences October 3 1981)

174 See CCC 119.

profit from their work in the many Catholic biblical commentaries that are available, such as those by Scott Hahn, Frank Sheed, Pope Benedict XVI, *etc.*

Thus we discover the *literal* sense — the plain sense — of Scripture: the meaning "conveyed by the words" and "discovered by exegesis."¹⁷⁵ This sense is the basis for any other sense it may have.¹⁷⁶

Spiritual sense

However, because Scripture was written by God, we must also keep in mind its divine authorship. We do this in three ways:¹⁷⁷

- by paying attention *to the content and the unity of Scripture as a whole*. "Scripture is a unity by reason of the unity of God's plan,"¹⁷⁸ however different the various books may be.
- by reading Scripture *within the living Tradition of the whole Church*. The Church "carries in her Tradition the living memorial of God's Word, and it is the Holy Spirit Who gives her the spiritual interpretation of the Scriptures."¹⁷⁹
- by keeping in mind *the coherence of the truths of faith*, among themselves and within the whole of Revelation.¹⁸⁰

Thus we discover the *spiritual* sense of Scripture, which may be subdivided:¹⁸¹

- *allegorical*. Through typology, "we can acquire a more profound understanding of events by recognizing their significance" in the light of Christ.¹⁸²
- *moral*. Scripture was written "for our instruction,"¹⁸³ so it should influence our conduct.¹⁸⁴
- *anagogical*.¹⁸⁵ The "realities and events" in Scripture have "eternal significance"; they lead us "toward our true homeland."¹⁸⁶ For example, the Church on earth is a prefiguration of the heavenly Jerusalem.¹⁸⁷

Church's judgement

Taken together, the literal, allegorical, moral, and anagogical senses of Scripture guarantee "to the living reading of Scripture in the Church" all its "richness."¹⁸⁸

Of course, all our reading and interpretation, no matter how knowledgeable we are, "is ultimately subject to the judgement of the Church," for she alone has the right and the duty of "watching over and interpreting" divine Revelation.

'To meet Someone'

Since Pope John Paul II's formal acknowledgement that the Church had made a mistake in condemning Galileo,¹⁸⁹ we have become familiar with the idea that the Bible is not a science book.¹⁹⁰

However, we must realize that it is not a catechism,¹⁹¹ either. If we look to it for the "deposit of faith,"¹⁹² we find it unsystematic and incomplete. About one

175 From the Greek *exegesis* ("interpretation").

176 See CCC 116.

177 See CCC 111.

178 CCC 112

179 See CCC 113 and Appendix 1.

180 See CCC 114 and Appendix 1.

181 See CCC 115.

182 CCC 117. See Appendix 3.

183 1 Cor 10:11

184 See CCC 117.

185 From the Greek *anagoge* ("leading").

186 CCC 117

187 See Rv 3:12, 21:1-2, 10-27.

188 CCC 115

189 October 31 1992

190 The Bible "speaks to us of the origin of the universe and its make-up not in order to provide us with a scientific treatise, but in order to state the correct relationships of man with God and with the universe.... Any other teaching about the origin and makeup of the universe is alien to the intentions of the Bible" (Pope John Paul II: Address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences October 3 1981).

191 From the Greek *katechizo* ("make hear").

192 CCC 86

third of the Gospels is devoted to the single week before Easter; much of what Christ must have said and done at other times is glossed over or omitted.

For example, Matthew says that "Jesus toured all of Galilee," teaching in the synagogues¹⁹³ — but he does not record what He taught. Mark says that He began to instruct a crowd "at great length, by the use of parables" — but he recounts only one.¹⁹⁴ Luke says that on Easter Sunday, He met two men on the road to Emmaus and, beginning "with Moses and all the prophets," explained to them "every passage of Scripture that referred to Him"¹⁹⁵ — but he does not give us a transcript. For the next "forty days," He spoke to His apostles "about the reign of God"¹⁹⁶ — but, again, we are not told what He said.

We cannot go to Scripture, then, for the complete "deposit of faith."¹⁹⁷ In fact, says Frank Sheed, we should read Scripture, especially the Gospels, "not to prove something, but to meet Someone"¹⁹⁸ — Jesus Christ, God made Man.

"In Christ Jesus we can see God in our own nature, experiencing the things we have experienced, coping with situations we have to cope with. Thereby we know God as the most devout pagan cannot know Him."

To know God, we must "return to the Gospels to learn what the Holy Spirit has willed us to know of the coming of God the Son into our race," he says: "the infancy and boyhood, the ministry, the suffering and death, the Resurrection, and the Ascension into Heaven. There will be words and actions in which we cannot see meaning, but the evangelists did not write them idly, nor the Holy Spirit idly inspire them to do so. We must read intently, growing in knowledge of His words and acts, building our intimacy with Himself."¹⁹⁹

Accordingly, the Church urges us — "forcefully and specifically" — to "learn the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ"²⁰⁰ by reading Scripture frequently. "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ."²⁰¹

Conclusion

"The force and power" of divine Revelation gives the Church "support and vigour." It gives her children "strength for their faith, food for the soul, and a pure and lasting fount of spiritual life."²⁰²

We find it not only in Scripture, but also in Sacred Tradition, interpreted authentically in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the documents of ecumenical councils, papal encyclicals and apostolic exhortations, and even the Pope's General Audiences — all available online at vatican.va.

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 Frank Sheed: *To Know Jesus Christ*

193 Mt 4:23

194 See Mk 4:1-9.

195 Lk 24:27

196 See Acts 1:3.

197 CCC 86

198 See Appendix 2.

199 Frank Sheed: *To Know Jesus Christ*, Foreword. See Appendix 2.

200 See Phil 3:8.

201 CCC 133

202 See CCC 131.

Appendix 1: *Sola Scriptura?*¹

The Gospels make it clear that Jesus intended to make Himself and His teaching known to the whole world for all time, and that He founded His Church to accomplish that purpose.

"You are the light of the world," He told His apostles. "Your light must shine before men."² Right before His Ascension, He told them to "make disciples of all the nations" and "teach them to carry out everything I have commanded You."³ St. Paul says that now, "through the Church, God's manifold wisdom is made known."⁴

How could Christ ensure that His Church would always teach the truth about Him (matters of *faith*) and the supernatural life He offers us (matters of *morals*)?

Constitution

Jesus could have given us a written constitution. In fact, many Christians think of the Bible as just that, although the Catholic Church, which compiled it, does not.

If that was Jesus' plan, it has certainly not worked. There are now some 20,000 Protestant denominations, each based on a different interpretation of the Bible.⁵

But has such a plan *ever* worked?

The United States has a constitution, dating from 1789. According to the late US Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia,⁶ its whole purpose was to prevent people of the future from doing certain things, even by majority vote. It says, in effect, "I don't care what you want: the Bill of Rights⁷ says you cannot do it."⁸

How well is *it* working?

Not very well, said Scalia. Many of the "rights" the Court claims to have "found" in the constitution for the last 40-50 years "clearly did not exist" when the documents were written, he said, nor when the "reconstruction" amendments⁹ were adopted after the 1861-65 civil war.

"It's plain that the right to an abortion¹⁰ was not thought to exist — absolutely plain," he said. "There were laws against it in all the states." Similarly, there was no "right to die," he said; "there were laws against suicide."

Scalia said that the Court regards the constitution as "a sort of empty bottle" containing "society's aspirations," the "precise content of which is quite indeterminate." In contrast, he himself views it as "a text, like a statute, which means what it meant when it was passed," even though "sometimes it's awfully hard to tell what the original meaning was."

Using the Bible

And it is clear that, taken as a constitution for Christianity, the Bible is not working any better.

For example, until 1930, every Christian church used the Bible to condemn artificial contraception as sinful.¹¹ In 1920, the Anglican Communion gave "an emphatic warning against the use of unnatural means for the avoidance of

1 Latin for "Scripture Alone," the Protestant principle that all divine Revelation is contained exclusively in the Bible: that there is no revealed Tradition.

2 Mt 5:14,16

3 Mt 28:19-20

4 Eph 2:10

5 See the talk on "Divisions Among Christians."

6 Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States 1986-2016.

7 Collectively, the first ten amendments to the United State Constitution, ratified December 15 1791.

8 Antonin Scalia spoke October 18 1996 at The Catholic University of America. Also see Scalia: *A Matter of Interpretation: Federal Courts and the Law*.

9 The 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments to the US constitution, adopted 1865-1870.

10 In its 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* decision, the Court said that in the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, adopted July 9 1868, the "concept of personal liberty and restrictions upon state action" includes "a right of personal privacy, or a guarantee of certain areas or zones of privacy" and that this "right of privacy" is "broad enough to encompass a woman's decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy."

11 They cited, as the Catholic Church still does, Gn 1:28, in which God told Adam and Eve, "Be fertile and multiply"; and Gn 38:6-11, in which Onan, rather than impregnate his brother's widow, "wasted his seed on the ground" and thus "greatly offended the Lord."

conception, together with the grave dangers — physical, moral, and religious — thereby incurred," and it "steadfastly" upheld "the paramount importance in married life of deliberate and thoughtful self-control."¹² However, ten years later, it ruled "that other methods may be used" in cases "where there is a clearly felt moral obligation to limit or avoid parenthood."¹³

Some Christians even use the Bible to *support* this latter position. "Jesus repeatedly denounced the Pharisees for their additions to the Law of God," says one. "Does the Bible clearly state that contraception is sinful, or that people are obligated to have as many children as possible?"¹⁴ If the Bible does not say these things, we need to fear God and be frightened of adding to His word."¹⁵

Different churches, then, can read the Bible in mutually contradictory ways. So can the same church at different times.

To be sure of the truth, we need guidance. We are like the Ethiopian who was "reading the Prophet Isaiah." When Philip asked him, "Do you really grasp what you are reading?" he answered, "How can I, unless someone explains it to me?"¹⁶

Personal guidance

Perhaps Jesus could have stayed on earth and guided us Himself (although many people had already withstood the power of His teaching and His miracles).

But that is not God's style. "He seems to do nothing of Himself which He can possibly delegate to His creatures. He commands us to do slowly and blunderingly what He could do perfectly and in the twinkling of an eye. He allows us to neglect what He would have us do, or to fail."¹⁷

Accordingly, Jesus founded His Church to continue His work on earth.

Moreover, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says that after the Resurrection, His humanity could "no longer be confined to earth"; it belonged "henceforth only to the Father's divine realm."¹⁸ In His risen Body He passed "from the state of death to another life beyond time and space."¹⁹ Accordingly, 40 days after the Resurrection, He ascended to His Father.²⁰

However, He did not leave us "orphaned."²¹ In His place, He promised to send His Holy Spirit. "I tell you the sober truth," He told His apostles. "It is much better for you that I go. If I fail to go, the Paraclete will never come to you, whereas if I go, I will send Him to you."²²

"I have much more to tell you," He said, "but you cannot bear it now. When He comes, however, being the Spirit of truth, He will guide you to all truth," announcing to Christ's Church what He receives from Christ.²³ Since Pentecost,²⁴ then, the coming of God's reign "is the work of the Spirit of the Lord, Who completes [Christ's] work on earth and brings us the fullness of grace."²⁵

The Holy Spirit accomplishes this work — in a visible way, "as the nature of man demands"²⁶ — through Sacred Tradition and the Bible, interpreted authoritatively by the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.

12 Lambeth Conference, Resolution 68

13 Lambeth Conference, Resolution 15

14 The Catholic Church, which still teaches that artificial contraception is sinful, does not teach that people are obligated to have as many children as possible. Rather, she upholds what the Anglican Communion upheld until 1930: "the paramount importance in married life of deliberate and thoughtful self-control." (See the talk on "God's Will.")

15 James B. Jordan: *The Bible and Family Planning: An Answer to Charles Provan's The Bible and Birth Control*

16 See Acts 8:26-40.

17 C.S. Lewis: *Fern-Seed and Elephants*, "The Efficacy of Prayer"

18 CCC 645

19 CCC 646

20 See Mk 16:19; Lk 24:51; Acts 1:9-11.

21 Jn 14:18

22 Jn 16:7

23 See Jn 16:12-15.

24 Fifty days after Easter, when the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles (see Acts 2:1-4).

25 See CCC 2818.

26 See CCC 2467.

Appendix 2: New Testament Content

Introduction

Starting at Pentecost,¹ the apostles passed on "what they themselves had received." They did it by their preaching, their example, and the institutions they established.² Also, some of them, and some who knew them, recorded it *in writing*.³ What, precisely, did this writing pass on?

Not modern history

Roughly a third of the Gospels is devoted to a single week in Christ's life: Holy Week.⁴ "That is the Good News. That is their topic."⁵ The other two thirds, "apart from two swift glances at Christ's conception and infancy,"⁶ describe the couple of years of His public ministry, including a handful of things He did and said.⁷

Each writer "selected certain of the many elements which had been handed on, either orally or already in written form; others they synthesized or explained with an eye to the current situation of the churches"⁸ — what we call dioceses.

Clearly, the evangelists⁹ were not "as much interested" as modern historians are "in a precise chronology," except for Holy Week, and, in Luke, for the date of Christ's birth. Otherwise, "only St. John has any real chronology at all."¹⁰ They seem to have arranged much of their material "according to subject-matter rather than to the logical or chronological succession of events."¹¹

Something we do *not* find in the Gospels, then, is precise chronology.

Not a doctrinal summary

Nowhere in the New Testament is there a "full and formal statement" of Christ's teaching," or even "an ordered statement of any single area of Revelation": God, human life, redemption, sin, or Heaven. What we are told is "moral more than doctrinal";¹² the doctrine "could be written out in very few pages."¹³

Matthew, for example, tells us "Jesus went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues,"¹⁴ but does not tell us what He taught.

Mark tells us that Jesus began to instruct a huge crowd "at great length, by the use of parables,"¹⁵ but he recounts only three. On another, similar, occasion,¹⁶ he reports nothing of what Jesus said. Twelve times, he says, Christ was called

1 See Acts 2:1-4.

2 See the talk on "What is the Catholic Church?"

3 See CCC 76.

4 See the talk on "Holy Week."

5 Frank Sheed: *God and the Human Condition* 1, IV, 2

6 See Mt 1-2, Lk 1-2.

7 See Frank Sheed: *God and the Human Condition* 1, IV, 2. Matthew, a Jew living in a Jewish Christian community in Antioch or Syria, wrote about 75-80 AD, after the fall of Jerusalem (70 AD). His Gospel reveals Jesus as the Messiah. (See the talk on "The History of Our Salvation.") Mark, probably a follower of Peter living in a Gentile Christian community in Rome, wrote about 65-70 AD, when the Romans were subduing Jewish rebellions and persecuting Christians. His Gospel reveals Jesus as Teacher and Healer. Luke, a Gentile who travelled with Paul, wrote about 80-85 AD, when the Romans were persecuting Jews and Christians intensely. Written in Rome or perhaps Caesarea, his Gospel reveals Jesus' mercy to Gentiles, women, and the poor. John, the "beloved disciple" (see Jn 13:25, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7,20), wrote between 90 and 110 AD, when the Jews had expelled Christians from the synagogues. He probably lived in Ephesus, in what is now Asia Minor, where there were Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles. His Gospel reveals Jesus as the divine Son of God. (See the talk on "Who is Jesus Christ?")

8 CCC 126

9 The Gospel writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; from the Greek *eu* ("good") plus *angelos* ("messenger").

10 See William Temple: *Readings in St. John's Gospel*, "Introduction."

11 Dorothy Sayers: *The Man Born to be King*, "Introduction." For example, "Matthew takes a number of sayings which in Luke are distributed over a dozen different contexts, and arranges them in the one long discourse which we know as the 'Sermon on the Mount'" (see Mt 5-7). Luke puts together "little bundles of aphorisms." Mark presents us with lists of miracles joined together by vague formulas like "about that time," or "on another occasion" (see Mk 2:13,23, 4:1, 7:31, 8:1).

12 That is, how we should behave rather than what we should believe.

13 Frank Sheed: *God and the Human Condition* 1, IV, 2

14 Mt 4:23

15 Mk 4:1-2

16 Mk 6:34

Teacher,¹⁷ but he records even less of Christ's teaching than the other evangelists.

Luke says that after His Resurrection, Jesus appeared to His apostles "over the course of forty days, speaking to them about the reign of God."¹⁸ What He said must have shaped the early Church — but Luke gives us no details. Luke says that on the road to Emmaus with the two disciples, Jesus "interpreted for them every passage of Scripture that referred to Him," but, again, he gives us no details — even though these passages, Jesus implies, should have told the disciples that the Messiah would have to "undergo all this suffering so as to enter into His glory."¹⁹

John, too, says that Jesus "taught," without giving the content of His teaching.²⁰

Paul says, "The Gospel I proclaimed to you is no mere human invention. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I schooled in it. It came by revelation from Jesus Christ."²¹ However, he does not tell us what it comprised.

Three years after returning to Damascus, Paul visited "Jerusalem to get to know Cephas [Peter], with whom I stayed fifteen days," but he says nothing of what they discussed. Then, "after fourteen years," he "went up to Jerusalem again" and talked to James, Cephas, and John, laying out "for their scrutiny the Gospel as I present it to the Gentiles."²² However, he gives us no clue to what that "Gospel" was.

In the *Acts of the Apostles*, Luke tells us that he and Paul "spoke" to the women gathered on the bank of the river outside Philippi, resulting in the Baptism of Lydia and her household. However, he does not tell us what he and Paul said.²³

Luke also says that at Troas, Paul preached "on and on," "until midnight," so that "Eutychus, who was sitting on the window-sill, became drowsier and drowsier. He finally went sound asleep, and fell from the third storey to the ground." Paul revived him, but then "he went upstairs again" and continued to talk "for a long while — until his departure at dawn."²⁴ Again, Luke gives us nothing of what Paul said.

Paul possessed "remarkable powers of theological analysis" and a "grasp of profundities," but it was "crises and controversies" that brought them into play. In general, his letters were responses to particular situations; his usual style "suggests spontaneity and urgency."²⁵ For example, his dissertation on the Lord's Supper was occasioned by the misbehaviour of the Corinthians at Mass.²⁶

Paul clarified doctrines because he himself had "wrestled in anguish with them"; he offered "new richness" because he had "been caught up in ecstasy over them."²⁷

We cannot go to the New Testament, then, for a summary of Christian doctrine.

Not the first catechesis

In general, the New Testament writers were not "trying to prove the doctrine or even to state it, but only clarifying and developing and drawing consequences from truths already known and accepted by their readers." They were not writing an "introduction to Christianity" or a "beginners' course" in its doctrine.²⁸

For example, Luke says of his own purpose: "Many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the events which have been fulfilled in our midst, precisely as those events were transmitted to us by the original eyewitnesses and ministers of the word. I too have carefully traced the sequence of events from the beginning, and have decided to set it in writing for you, Theophilus, so that Your Excellency may see how reliable the instruction was that you received."²⁹

17 See Mk:4:38, 5:35, 9:17,38, 10:17,20,35, 12:14,19,32, 13:1, 14:14.

18 Acts 1:3

19 Lk 24:25-27

20 See Jn 7:14,28, 8:2,20.

21 Gal 1:11-12

22 See Gal 2:1-9.

23 See Acts 16:11-15.

24 See Acts 20:7-12.

25 See the Jerusalem Bible, Reader's Edition, 1968: *Introduction to the Letters of St. Paul*.

26 See 1 Cor 11:17-33.

27 Frank Sheed: *God and the Human Condition 1*, IV, 2

28 Frank Sheed: *God and the Human Condition 1*, IV, 2

29 Lk 1:1-4

Apparently, Luke simply narrates events because he assumes that his readers have already been instructed. In fact, all the New Testament writers assume the same.

Paul writes to the Galatians about the Gospel "we delivered to you,"³⁰ "the one you received,"³¹ the Gospel "I proclaimed to you."³²

He reminds the Corinthians of "what I handed on to you"³³ about the Eucharist; "of the Gospel preached to you, which you received";³⁴ of how he "handed on to them" what "he himself had received"³⁵ about Christ's death and Resurrection.

He urges Timothy to "take as a model of sound teaching what you have heard me say."³⁶ He enjoins the Thessalonians to "hold to the traditions you received from us, either by our word or by letter."³⁷ He tells the Romans, "I have written to you rather boldly in parts of this letter by way of reminder."³⁸

The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews reproaches the people, saying, "You need someone to teach you again the basic elements of the oracles of God."³⁹

Jude reminds his readers of what the apostles "kept telling you."⁴⁰

John, too, says, "This, remember, is the message you heard from the beginning."⁴¹ Moreover, he makes it clear that much of his instruction will be oral: "While there is much more that I could write you, I do not intend to put it down on paper; instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face."⁴²

And, near the beginning, the author of the Letter to the Hebrews says that "we must attend all the more to what we have heard, lest we drift away."⁴³

The New Testament, then, is not a *catechism*,⁴⁴ a manual of Christian doctrine. Its writers assume that its readers have already been *catechized*.⁴⁵

What is the syllabus?

The nearest thing to a catechism in the New Testament refers to "the foundation": namely "repentance from dead works, faith in God, instruction about Baptism and laying-on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgement."⁴⁶

"It is a splendid list," but it does not tell us what each heading covers. "And it does not pretend to completeness — Christ Himself is not listed!"⁴⁷

We also have what is called the *Kerygma* — the sermons preached by Peter on Pentecost Sunday⁴⁸ and on the occasions of his miracles,⁴⁹ his arrest,⁵⁰ and his visit to a Gentile,⁵¹ as well as a sermon preached by Paul at Antioch.⁵²

But *kerygma*⁵³ means "preaching" or "proclaiming," as distinct from "teaching" or "instructing."⁵⁴ It was not a syllabus or compendium of Christian doctrine — not like what Paul must have laid before James, Cephas, and John for their scrutiny.⁵⁵

30 Gal 1:8

31 Gal 1:9

32 Gal 1:11

33 1 Cor 11:23

34 1 Cor 15:1

35 1 Cor 15:3

36 2 Tim 1:13

37 2 Thes 2:15

38 Rom 15:15

39 Heb 5:12

40 Jude 17

41 Jn 3:11

42 2 Jn 12

43 Heb 2:1

44 From the Greek *katechizo* ("make hear").

45 Instructed in Christian doctrine; from the Greek *katechein* ("teach by word of mouth").

46 Heb 6:1-2

47 Frank Sheed: *God and the Human Condition* 1, IV, 2

48 See Acts 2:14-36.

49 See Acts 3:12-16, 4:8-12.

50 See Acts 5:29-32.

51 See Acts 10:34-43.

52 See Acts 13:16-44.

53 From the Greek *kerygma* ("proclamation"), from *keryks* ("herald").

54 See John Hardon: *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, "Kerygma."

55 See Gal 2:1-9.

To know Jesus Christ

Why, then, do we read the New Testament?

The answer — in the words Jesus addressed to His Father — is "to know You, the only true God, and Him Whom You have sent, Jesus Christ."⁵⁶

"I trust the Gospels," Pope Benedict XVI says. "I believe that this Jesus — the Jesus of the Gospels — is a historically plausible and convincing Figure."⁵⁷

Jesus is "God the Son made Man for us."⁵⁸ He has two natures — "the nature of God and the nature of man"⁵⁹ — but He is only one Person: "the Person of God the Son."⁶⁰ We read Scripture to give this doctrine "a special kind of life in us." Otherwise, we can easily "turn the one Person and the two natures into a diagram, deducing all sorts of propositions from it, building up a highly intellectual devotional life from it. But Christ our Lord was a not a diagram."⁶¹

For many of us, Christ "is not quite 'really' real — not altogether Human,"⁶² says Dorothy Sayers, who tried to portray Him on the stage.⁶³ "The minute you take Christ as Somebody really real, you're landed in theology — but you can't produce acting by arguing about *kenosis*⁶⁴ or the monophysite⁶⁵ heresy.⁶⁶ You've got to translate the thing into terms of life and action — what would the double nature⁶⁷ feel like, look like? You can't just say it's a mystery and leave it at that; the real Jesus didn't look like a walking conundrum — He looked like a Person."⁶⁸

And it is that Person Whom the evangelists portray — men who lived with Him and heard Him preach and teach, in their own language, against the background of their own customs and laws. Those men, and those who knew them, "have a unique quality in their writing"; we feel Him there "as nowhere else."⁶⁹

"If anything whatever is common to all believers, it is the sense that in the Gospels they have met a Personality." There are historical characters whom we do not know personally: Attila,⁷⁰ Alexander,⁷¹ William of Orange.⁷² There are unhistorical characters whom we do know personally: Falstaff,⁷³ Uncle Toby,⁷⁴ Mr. Pickwick.⁷⁵ But there are only three who have both kinds of reality: Plato's Socrates,⁷⁶ Boswell's Johnson,⁷⁷ and the Jesus of the Gospels.⁷⁸

Commentaries on the Gospels⁷⁹ can give us insight and appreciation, but they cannot replace the Gospels themselves. "First-hand knowledge is not only more worth acquiring than second-hand knowledge, but is usually much easier and more delightful to acquire."⁸⁰

"Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ."⁸¹

56 Jn 17:3

57 Pope Benedict XVI: *Jesus of Nazareth, Part One*, Foreword

58 *The Penny Catechism*, 32

59 *The Penny Catechism*, 41

60 *The Penny Catechism*, 42

61 Frank Sheed: *To Know Jesus Christ*, Foreword

62 Dorothy Sayers: *Unpopular Opinions*, "A vote of thanks to Cyrus"

63 In Britain, such portrayal was hedged about with legal restrictions until 1968. Besides the 1941-42 radio play *The Man Born to Be King*, Sayers wrote the plays *Zeal of Thy House* (1937), *He That Should Come* (1938), and *The Devil to Pay* (1939).

64 Greek for "emptying," so as to become entirely receptive to God's will. (See Phil 2:7.)

65 From the Greek *monos* ("single") plus *physis* ("nature").

66 The heresy that Jesus did not have a human nature, but only the divine nature, condemned at the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

67 Jesus Christ has two natures: "the nature of God and the nature of man" (*The Penny Catechism*, 41).

68 Dorothy Sayers: *Unpopular Opinions*, "Divine Comedy"

69 Frank Sheed: *To Know Jesus Christ*, Foreword

70 Attila "the Hun" (d. 453)

71 King Alexander the Great of Macedon (356-323 BC)

72 King William III of England (1650-1702), who invaded England in 1688 and deposed King James II.

73 Sir John Falstaff, in Shakespeare: *Henry IV Part 1*, *Henry IV Part 2*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*

74 Tristram Shandy's uncle, in Laurence Sterne: *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*

75 Samuel Pickwick, in Charles Dickens: *The Pickwick Papers*

76 Greek philosopher (469-399 BC), whose biography Plato wrote in his *Dialogues*

77 James Boswell (1709-1784), who wrote *The Life of Samuel Johnson*

78 See C.S. Lewis: *Fern-seed and Elephants*, "Fern-seed and Elephants."

79 Like Frank Sheed: *To Know Jesus Christ* and Pope Benedict XVI: *Jesus of Nazareth, Parts One and Two*.

80 C.S. Lewis: *God in the Dock*, "On the Reading of Old Books"

81 CCC 133

Appendix 3: Typology

Introduction

When Biblical scholars speak of a "type,"¹ they mean a person, thing, action, or event — usually in the Old Testament — that "prefigures" or "foreshadows" a new and greater truth, action, or event² — usually in the New Testament.

For example, they say, the Jewish Pasch was the "type" of Christ's Passion and death: Christ was sacrificed like the paschal lamb,³ and His blood frees us from sin and death as the blood of the paschal lambs saved the Israelites from Egypt.⁴

"Typology" is the study of Biblical "types." The Church has always used typology to illuminate "the unity of the divine plan in the two Testaments," discerning in the works of the Old Testament "prefigurations" of what God accomplished in the New.⁵ Through typology, she discovers the *allegorical* sense of Sacred Scripture, acquiring "a more profound understanding of events by recognizing their significance" in the light of Christ.⁶

Typology assumes, then, that "the full significance of what the writers are saying" is "apparent only in the light of events that happened after they were dead."⁷

Not intentional

"Such a doctrine, not without reason, arouses deep distrust in a modern mind," says C.S. Lewis. "Because, as we know, almost anything can be read into any book if you are determined enough."⁸

"This will be especially impressed on anyone who has written fantastic fiction," he says (that is, fiction based on fantasy). "He will find reviewers, both favourable and hostile, reading into his stories all manner of allegorical meanings which he never intended. (Some of the allegories thus imposed on my own books have been so ingenious and interesting that I often wish I had thought of them myself.)"⁹

For example, "many reviewers said that the ring in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* was suggested by the atom bomb. What could be more plausible? Here is a book published when everyone was preoccupied by that sinister invention; here in the centre of the book is a weapon which it seems madness to throw away yet fatal to use." However, Lewis says, "the chronology of the book's composition" rules it out.¹⁰

"Apparently it is impossible," he says, "for the wit of man to devise a narrative in which the wit of some other man cannot, and with some plausibility, find a hidden sense."¹¹ He warns, therefore, that typology opens us to the possibility of self-deception. Nevertheless, he says, we cannot abandon it "when we are dealing, as Christians, with the Bible."¹²

We must keep in mind "that any human utterance of a certain weight contains more than the author may have been immediately aware of at the time," says Pope Benedict XVI. "When a word transcends the moment in which it is spoken, it carries within itself a deeper value. This deeper value pertains most of all to words that have matured in the course of faith-history."¹³

Non-Biblical literature

Typology exists even in secular literature, Lewis notes, and he gives examples.¹⁴

1 In ordinary English, this meaning of "type" survives in the word "prototype": "the original thing or person in relation to any copy, imitation, representation, later specimen, improved form, etc."

2 See John Hardon: *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, "Types, Scriptural."

3 See Acts 8:32; 1 Cor 5:7; 1 Pt 1:19; and the numerous references to "the Lamb" in the Book of Revelation.

4 See the talk on "Mass: Sacrament and Sacrifice."

5 CCC 128

6 See CCC 117.

7 C.S. Lewis: *Reflections on the Psalms*, X

8 C.S. Lewis: *Reflections on the Psalms*, X

9 C.S. Lewis: *Reflections on the Psalms*, X

10 C.S. Lewis: *Fern-seed and Elephants*, "Fern-seed and Elephants"

11 C.S. Lewis: *Reflections on the Psalms*, X

12 C.S. Lewis: *Reflections on the Psalms*, X

13 Pope Benedict XVI: *Jesus of Nazareth, Part One*, Foreword

1) A Roman historian¹⁵ describes a fire in a provincial town that was thought to have been started deliberately in the public baths. Supporting this suspicion was the fact that, earlier that day, a man had complained that the water in the hot bath was only lukewarm and an attendant had replied, "It will soon be hot enough."

The slave had said "something truer, or more importantly true, than he himself supposed," says Lewis. But, clearly, there need be nothing more here than mere coincidence.

2) A man who knows only England observes that the higher a mountain, the longer it retains the snow in spring. Accordingly, he writes a story about a mountain so high that it retains the snow all year round.

Like the slave, the man has written something truer than he knows. But here it is not coincidence, but what scientists would call extrapolation.

3) Plato¹⁶ noted that righteousness is often praised for the rewards it brings: honour, popularity, *etc.* However, he said, to see righteousness in its true nature we must imagine a perfectly righteous man treated by all around him as a monster of wickedness. We must picture this perfect man "bound, scourged, and finally impaled (the Persian equivalent of crucifixion)."¹⁷

Like the slave and the Englishman, Plato said something truer than he knew. But his description of the righteous man's passion is neither simple coincidence nor extrapolation: "it is the very same thing of which Christ's Passion is the supreme illustration."¹⁸

Lewis concludes, then, that typology cannot be abandoned.¹⁹

Biblical typology

Indeed, the Bible itself prompts us to look for types: to apply to the New Testament what we read in the Old. There are many cases in which the apostles and evangelists applied Old Testament phrases and prophecies in this way.²⁰

- Speaking of the fate of the unbelieving Jews who were "struck down in the desert," Paul said, "These things happened as an example to keep us from wickedness such as theirs."²¹
- Paul urged the Corinthians to "get rid of the old yeast to make of yourselves fresh dough — unleavened loaves, as it were."²² He was referring to God's rules for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which followed the Passover every year.²³
- The Letter to the Hebrews said, "Since the Law had only a shadow of the good things to come, and no real image of them, it was never able to perfect the worshippers by the same sacrifices offered continually, year after year."²⁴
- Peter said that people had disobeyed God "as long ago as Noah's day, while God waited patiently while the ark was built. At that time, a few persons, eight in all, escaped in the ark through the water. You are now saved by a baptismal bath which corresponds to this exactly."²⁵
- When the Ethiopian who was "reading the prophet Isaiah"²⁶ asked Philip whom the prophet was talking about, Philip told him "the good news of Jesus."²⁷
- Referring to what had just happened at the descent of the Holy Spirit, Peter quoted the prophet Joel,²⁸ saying that this is what the prophet had spoken of.²⁹

14 See C.S. Lewis: *Reflections on the Psalms*, X.

15 I have been unable to find out which.

16 Greek philosopher and mathematician, c 426 - c 328 BC.

17 Plato: *Republic*, Book II, 362a, cited in Joseph Ratzinger: *Introduction to Christianity*, Part Two, II, 2

18 C.S. Lewis: *Reflections on the Psalms*, X

19 C.S. Lewis: *Reflections on the Psalms*, X

20 See CCC 128-129.

21 See 1 Cor 10:1-11.

22 Cor 5:7-8

23 See Ex 12:14-20.

24 Heb 10:1

25 1 Pt 3:21

26 See Is 53:7-8.

27 See Acts 8:27-35.

28 See J1 2:28-32.

- Alluding to Jesus, Peter told the people what "David says of Him,"³⁰ quoting Psalm 16.³¹
- Matthew and John repeatedly pointed out that what they were reporting had happened in such a way as to "fulfil" Scripture.³²
We also have ample authority for typology from Jesus Himself.
- Satan applied the words of Psalm 91 to Jesus:³³ "He shall bid His angels take care of you,"³⁴ and we may be sure that Jesus approved the application, since only He could be the source of this story.³⁵
- In argument with the Jewish authorities,³⁶ Jesus asked, "Are you not familiar with this passage of Scripture: 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the keystone of the structure'³⁷?" Clearly, He was identifying Himself with this rejected stone — so clearly that "they wanted to arrest Him."³⁸
- He repeatedly identified Himself with "the Son of Man" mentioned in the Old Testament.³⁹
- He said, "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up."⁴⁰
- He quoted Isaiah: "It is written in Scripture, 'He was counted among the wicked,'"⁴¹ and added, "This, I tell you, must come to be fulfilled in Me."⁴²
- On the cross, He quoted from Psalm 22: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"⁴³
- On the road to Emmaus, beginning with "Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted for them every passage of Scripture [the Old Testament] that referred to Him."⁴⁴
- He spoke of the "fulfilment" of Scripture in Himself.⁴⁵

'Family style'

We have, therefore, ample authorization for typology. However, its basis lies deeper. Jesus' miracles give us, *a priori*,⁴⁶ reason to *expect* to find, in the Old Testament, foreshadowing of what happens in the New.

In His miracles, Jesus healed people,⁴⁷ brought dead people back to life,⁴⁸ changed water into wine,⁴⁹ fed thousands with a little food,⁵⁰ and controlled the forces of nature.⁵¹ The witnesses knew they were miracles because they happened suddenly and locally, at His word.

However, Jesus called them *His Father's works*. "If I do not perform My Father's

29 See Acts 2:16-21.

30 See Acts 2:22-28.

31 See Ps 16:8-11. Paul cites the same psalm: see Acts 13:35-37.

32 E.g. Mt 1:22-23 (see Is 7:14), 2:15 (see Hos 11:1), 2:17 (see Jer 31:15), 4:14-16 (see Is 9:1-2), 8:17 (see Is 53:4), 12:17-21 (see Is 42:1-4), 21:4-5 (see Zec 9:9), 26:54,56, 27:9-10; Jn 12:13,16 (see Ps 118:26-27), 12:14-15 (see Zec 9:9), 12:38 (see Is 53:1), 19:24 (see Ps 22:19), 19:36 (see Ex 12:46, Nm 9:12, Ps 34:21), 19:37 (see Nm 21:9, Zec 12:10).

33 See Mt 4:6.

34 Ps 91:11

35 See Mt 4:1-11.

36 See Mt 12:1-12.

37 Ps 118:22

38 Mk 12:12

39 See the talk on "Who is Jesus Christ?" Appendix 1.

40 Jn 3:14

41 Is 53:12

42 Lk 22:37

43 Ps 22:2; Mt 27:46

44 Lk 24:27

45 E.g. Jn 13:18 (see Ps 41:10), 15:25 (see Ps 38:19).

46 "In advance"

47 See Mt 8:1-4,5-15, 9:1-8,20-22,27-34, 12:9-13, 15:21-28, 17:14-18; Mk 1:23-26,29-31,40-42, 2:1-12, 3:1-5, 5:1-43, 6:34-44, 7:24-37, 8:22-26, 9:14-27, 10:46-52; Lk:4:33-39, 5:12-13,17-25, 7:2-10, 8:26-33,40-56, 13:10-13, 14:1-5, 17:11-19, 22:50; Jn 4:46-53, 5:1-9, 9:1-6.

48 See Mt 9:18,23-26; Lk 7:11-15; Jn 11:1-44.

49 See Jn 2:1-11.

50 See Mt 14:15-21; Mk 8:1-9; Lk 9:10-17,37-43; Jn 6:1-13.

51 See Mt 8:23-27, 14:22-33; Mk 4:35-41, 6:45-52; Lk 8:22-26; Jn 6:16-21.

works, put no faith in Me," He said. "But if I do perform them, even though you put no faith in Me, put faith in these works, so as to realize what it means that the Father is in Me and I in Him."^{5 2}

"I solemnly assure you: the Son cannot do anything by Himself — He can do only what He sees the Father doing," He said on another occasion. "For whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son, and everything the Father does He shows Him."^{5 3}

"There is an activity of God displayed throughout creation, a wholesale activity, let us say" — displayed always and everywhere^{5 4} — "which men refuse to recognize," Lewis explains. "The miracles done by God incarnate, living as a Man in Palestine, perform the very same things as this wholesale activity, but at a different speed and on a smaller scale."^{5 5}

For example,

- God creates human bodies able to heal themselves of wounds and disease. Thus, every year, God heals us. And, while He was on earth, Jesus did the same.
- God creates vines, which draw up water and, with the aid of the sun, over time, turn that water into a juice that will ferment and become wine. Thus, every year, God turns water into wine. And, at Cana,^{5 6} Jesus did the same.
- God creates plants and animals that can reproduce their kind. Thus, every year, God multiplies grain and fish. And, when Jesus fed the five thousand with a few loaves and fish,^{5 7} He did the same.^{5 8}

In Jesus' miracles, we do not find a genie appearing out of a bottle, as in *The Arabian Nights*; we find nothing like the things that happen in *Grimm's Fairy Tales* or Ovid's *Metamorphoses* or the Italian epics. There, the miracles are "so diverse that they can hardly be classified," Lewis points out. "Beasts turn into men and men into beasts or trees, trees talk, ships become goddesses, and a magic ring can cause tables richly spread with food to appear in solitary places."^{5 9}

Jesus did not make bread from nothing, or from stones, as Satan suggested.^{6 0} He made much bread from a little bread, just as His Father does. "There is, so to speak, a family style," Lewis says.^{6 1}

St. Athanasius says that "since men had failed to know [God's] Providence revealed in the universe, and had failed to perceive His Godhead shown in creation, they might at any rate from the works of His Body [that is, His Word made Flesh] recover their sight, and through Him receive an idea of the knowledge of the Father, inferring, as I said before, from particular cases, His providence over the whole."^{6 2}

In short, "the miracles are a retelling in small letters of the very same story that is written across the whole world in letters too large for some of us to see."^{6 3} It is a matter of course, then, that the Old Testament should contain foreshadowings of what happens in the New.

In fact, such foreshadowing permeates creation. That is why Jesus could teach so much by parables, drawing spiritual lessons from familiar experiences.^{6 4}

52 Jn 10:37-38. Also see Jn 11:42, 14:11.

53 Jn 5:19-20

54 See the talk on "A Place for Science in the Catholic Faith."

55 C.S. Lewis: *God in the Dock*, "Miracles"

56 See Jn 2:1-12.

57 See Mt 14:13-21.

58 For the relation between divine and natural causality in these examples, see the International Theological Commission: *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*, 68-69; see the talk on "A Place for Science in the Catholic Faith," Appendix 2. Pagans attribute these processes to spirits like Bacchus, Dionysus, Ceres, Adonis, or Apollo; atheists attribute real and ultimate causality to nature or even its patterns — the so-called "laws of nature" (see the talks on "The Contradictions of Atheism" and "A Place for Science in the Catholic Faith").

59 C.S. Lewis: *God in the Dock*, "Miracles"

60 See Mt 4:3-4.

61 C.S. Lewis: *God in the Dock*, "Miracles"

62 Athanasius: *De Incarnatione*, 19, 1

63 C.S. Lewis: *God in the Dock*, "Miracles"

64 See John Hardon: *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, "Parable."

Appendix 4: Who Wrote It?

Introduction

The Church claims that the Bible is inspired by God. Yet the Book of Genesis, for example, seems to be "derived from earlier Semitic stories that were pagan and mythical."¹ How can we say that God is their Author?²

"To compose the sacred books," the Church explains, "God chose certain men who, all the while He employed them in this task, made full use of their own faculties and powers so that, though He acted in them and by them, it was as true authors that they consigned to writing whatever He wanted written, and no more."³

God's style

To understand this explanation, notice that God's style seems to be to make things *out of* other things; to do things *by means of* other things.

This is not to deny that He made "all things out of nothing, by His word."⁴ Nor is to deny that when He made the first humans, He bestowed on them gifts that came directly from Him.⁵ In fact, *every* time He creates a human being, He creates the soul directly, not from something else.⁶

But God creates each human *out of* a sperm and an ovum. According to the theory of biological⁷ evolution, He made the first man *out of* one of the primates, the highest order of mammals. According to the Book of Genesis, He formed the first man "*out of* the clay of the ground" before He "blew into His nostrils the breath of life," thus making him "a living being."⁸

God could, "if He chose, repair our bodies miraculously without food, or give us food without the aid of farmers, bakers, and butchers; or [give us] knowledge without the aid of learned men; or convert the heathens without missionaries." He could even bring us into being without parents. "Instead, He allows soils and weather and animals and the muscles, minds, and wills of men to cooperate in the execution of His will."⁹

In fact, God "seems to do nothing of Himself which He can possibly delegate" to us. He lets us do "slowly and blunderingly what He could do perfectly and in the twinkling of an eye"; He even lets us "neglect what He would have us do." There seems to be, at every moment, "a sort of divine abdication." We are not mere recipients or spectators as His plan unfolds: we are "privileged to share in the game," "compelled to wield our little tridents."¹⁰

This, then, seems to be "how God makes something — indeed, makes gods¹¹ — out of nothing."¹²

1 C.S. Lewis: *Reflections on the Psalms*, XI

2 See CCC 105.

3 CCC 106

4 *The Penny Catechism*, 19

5 They included "self-knowledge," "self-possession," the ability to enter into "communion with other persons" (CCC 357), the capacity "to know and love" their Creator, and the possibility of sharing, "by knowledge and love, in God's own life" (CCC 356). "The emergence of the first members of the human species ... represents an event that is not susceptible of a purely natural explanation and which can appropriately be attributed to divine intervention" (International Theological Commission: *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*, 70; see the talk on "A Place for Science in the Catholic Faith," Appendix 2). In fact, the "transition to the spiritual" represents "an ontological leap" (Pope John Paul II: *Reflection on Science at the Dawn of the Third Millennium*, 6; see the talk on "A Place for Science in the Catholic Faith," Appendix 1).

6 See Pope Pius XII: *Humani Generis*, 36; Pope John Paul II: *Donum Vitae*, 5.

7 That is, the theory as developed by biologists, not the interpretations others mistakenly give it: e.g. "materialist," "reductionist," and "spiritualist" (Pope John Paul II: *Reflection on Science at the Dawn of the Third Millennium*, 4; see the talk on "A Place for Science in the Catholic Faith," Appendix 1).

8 See Gn 2:7.

9 C.S. Lewis: *The World's Last Night*, "The Efficacy of Prayer"

10 John Milton: *Comus*, line 27; C.S. Lewis: *The World's Last Night*, "The Efficacy of Prayer"

11 See the talk on "Supernatural Life," including Appendix 1.

12 C.S. Lewis: *The World's Last Night*, "The Efficacy of Prayer"

New out of old

Now when God makes something new out something old, He does not destroy or abolish the old.

For example, man — made *out of* an animal — is more than an animal, but he is still an animal. At his creation, man was taken up into a new life — the human — without relinquishing the old — the animal. Similarly, "all organic life takes up and uses processes merely chemical."¹³

And "we can trace the principle higher as well as lower."¹⁴ The Church holds that the Incarnation proceeded "not by the conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by the taking of manhood into God."¹⁵ Accordingly, Jesus is fully God, but also fully Man.

Analogously, we can say that the writing of Scripture proceeded not by conversion of God's word into human literature, but by the taking up of human literature to be God's word.¹⁶ Accordingly, Scripture is divine, but also human.

Such action by God "is not a threat" to human authorship. On the contrary, it allows the human authors "to be most fully" themselves. If another human author "used" them in this way, they would be victims of aggression; their "freedom and integrity would be undermined." But when God "uses" them, "the result is not diminution, but enhancement" of their identity as human authors.¹⁷

The work of God

In the Bible, then, God took human literature and raised it above itself; He "qualified" it and "compelled" it "to serve purposes which of itself it would not have served." The books of the Old Testament consist "of the same sort of material as any other literature — chronicle (some of it obviously pretty accurate), poems, moral and political diatribes, romances"¹⁸ — but all inspired by God.¹⁹

Not all are inspired in the same way. "There are prophets who write with the clearest awareness that divine compulsion is upon them."²⁰ There are chroniclers whose intention may have been merely to record. There are poets like those in the Song of Songs who probably never dreamed of any but a secular and natural purpose in what they composed." There is also the work of the Jews and then of the Catholic Church "in preserving and canonizing just these books."²¹

We can truly say, then, that "God is the Author of Sacred Scripture;"²² that all "the divinely revealed realities" that are "contained and presented" in Scripture have been written down "under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit."²³

13 C.S. Lewis: *Reflections on the Psalms*, XI

14 C.S. Lewis: *Reflections on the Psalms*, XI

15 See the Athanasian Creed.

16 See C.S. Lewis: *Reflections on the Psalms*, XI.

17 See Robert Barron: *The Priority of Christ*, 3. "God's action does not displace or supplant the activity of creaturely causes, but enables them to act according to their natures and, nonetheless, to bring about the ends He intends (International Theological Commission: *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*, 68; see the talk on "A Place for Science in the Catholic Faith," Appendix 2).

18 C.S. Lewis: *Reflections on the Psalms*, XI

19 See CCC 106.

20 For example, Jonah (see Jon 1:1-3, 3:1-3) and Amos (see Am 7:14-16).

21 C.S. Lewis: *Reflections on the Psalms*, XI

22 CCC 105

23 CCC 105