

***Dei Verbum***  
**The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation**  
**(18 Nov 1965)**

*“We proclaim to you the eternal life,  
which was with the Father and was made manifest to us:  
that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you,  
so that you too may have fellowship with us;  
and indeed, our fellowship is with the Father  
and with his Son Jesus Christ”  
(RSV 1 Jn 1:2-3).*

**Introduction    The Purpose of the Constitution *Dei Verbum*:**

#1 Following in the footsteps of the **COUNCIL OF TRENT**<sup>1</sup> and of the **FIRST VATICAN COUNCIL**<sup>2</sup>, this present council wishes to set forth:

- the authentic doctrine on divine revelation
- and how it is handed on,
- so that by hearing the message of salvation the whole world may believe,
- by believing it may hope, and by hoping it may love.

**Chapter I    1. Revelation itself:**

#2 In his goodness and wisdom, God chose to reveal himself and to make known to us

- **the hidden purpose of his will** (Cf. Eph. 1:9)
- by which through Christ, the Word made flesh,
- man might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father
- and **come to share in the divine nature**.

Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God out of the abundance of his love speaks to men as friends and lives among them, so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself.

This plan of revelation is realised by deeds and words having an inner unity:

- the deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation
- manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words,
- the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them.

By this revelation then, the deepest truth about God and the salvation of man shines out for our sake in Christ, who is both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation.

**2. Revelation perfected in Jesus Christ**

#4 Then, after speaking in many and varied ways through the prophets,

*‘now at last in these days God has spoken to us in his Son’.*

...Jesus Christ, therefore, **the Word made flesh**, was sent as ‘a man to men’.

To see Jesus is to see his Father<sup>3</sup>.

For this reason, Jesus perfected revelation by fulfilling it making Himself present and through his whole work of manifesting Himself...

The Christian dispensation, therefore, as the new and definitive covenant, will never pass away and we now await no further new public revelation before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> Convoked by Paul III; continued by Julius III, then by Pius IV; Lasted from 1545-1663

<sup>2</sup> Convoked by Pius IX on 29 June, 1868; began 08 Dec, 1869; adjourned 20 Oct, 1870 at the sack of Rome

<sup>3</sup> John 14:9

### 3. Revelation and Reason

#6 As a sacred Council<sup>4</sup> has affirmed, God, the beginning and end of all things, can be known with certainty from created reality by the light of human reason<sup>5</sup>; but teaches that it is through his revelation that those religious truths which are by their nature accessible to human reason can be known by all with ease, with solid certitude and with no trace of error, even in this present state of the human race.

## Chapter II The Transmission of Divine Revelation (Cf. The Council of Trent)

### 1. Tradition and Scripture: One source or two?

#7 In his gracious goodness, God has seen to it that what he had revealed for the salvation of all nations would abide perpetually in its full integrity and be handed on to all generation.<sup>6</sup>

- This sacred tradition, therefore,
- and Sacred Scripture of both the Old and New Testaments are like a mirror
- in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks at God, as he is, face to face<sup>7</sup>.

### 2. Tradition, Scripture and the Church

#8 The words of the holy Fathers witness to the presence of this living tradition, whose wealth is poured into the practice and life of the believing and praying Church.

- Through the same tradition the Church's full canon of the sacred books is known,
- and the sacred writings themselves are more profoundly understood and unceasingly made active in her;
- and thus God, who spoke of old, uninterruptedly converses with (the Church) the bride of his beloved Son;
- and the Holy Spirit, through whom the living voice of the Gospel resounds in the Church,
- and through (the Church), in the world, leads unto all truth those who believe
- and makes the word of Christ dwell abundantly in them<sup>8</sup>.

#9 Hence there exists a close connection and communication between sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture. For both of them: flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end.

- For **Sacred Scripture** is the **word of God** inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,
- while **sacred tradition** takes **the word of God** entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity, so that led by the light of the Spirit of Truth,
- they may in proclaiming it, preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known.

**Consequently, it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed.**

Therefore, both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence.

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<sup>4</sup> The First Vatican Council: Creation is the first word God speaks to us, in calling us to "be what you are!"

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Rom. 1:20*

<sup>6</sup> Christ commissioned the Apostles; they left Bishops as their Successors, both 'handed on' what they had received #7,8.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. 1 John 3:2

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Col. 3:16

### 3. The Magisterium at the service of Tradition and Scripture

#10 Sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture

- form one sacred deposit of the **word of God**, committed to the Church...
- The task of authentically interpreting the **word of God**, whether written or handed on,
- has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church
- whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ...

This teaching office (magisterium) is not above the word of God, but serves it,

- teaching only what has been handed on,
- listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully
- in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit,

it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed.

It is clear, therefore, that sacred tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church,  
in accord with God's most wise design,  
are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others,  
and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit  
contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.

### Chapter III The Divine Inspiration and Interpretation of Holy Scripture (Its inerrancy)

#### 1. The role of the Holy spirit

#11 Those divinely revealed realities which are contained and presented in Sacred Scripture  
have been committed to writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

For holy mother Church, relying on the belief of the Apostles  
holds that the books of both the Old and New Testaments in their entirety,  
with all their parts, are sacred and canonical because:

- they were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,
- they have God as their author
- and have been handed on as such to the Church herself.

#### 2. The Role of the human authors

In composing the sacred books, God chose men

- and while employed by him
- they made use of their powers and abilities,
- so that with him acting in them and through them,

they, as true authors, consigned to writing everything and only those things which he wanted.

Therefore, since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers

- must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit,
- it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged
- as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error
- that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings
- for the sake of salvation.

#### 3. The word of God in human words

#12 However, since God speaks in Sacred Scripture through men in human fashion,

- the interpreter of Sacred Scripture... should carefully investigate
- what meaning the sacred writers really intended,
- and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words....

Attention should be given, among other things, to 'literary forms'.

- For truth is set forth and expressed differently in texts which are variously
- historical, prophetic, poetic, or of other forms of discourse.

For the correct understanding of what the sacred author wanted to assert,

- due attention must be paid to the customary and characteristic styles
- of feeling, speaking and narrating which prevailed at the time of the sacred writer,
- and to the patterns men normally employed at that period
- in their everyday dealings with one another.

#### **4. The unity of Scripture safeguarded by the Church**

But, since Holy Scripture must be read and interpreted in the sacred spirit in which it was written, if the meaning of the sacred texts is to be correctly worked out

no less serious attention must be given to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture, taking into account at the same time:

- the living tradition of the whole Church
- the harmony which exists between elements of the faith.

All (interpretation)... is subject finally to the judgment of the Church, which carries out the divine commission and ministry of guarding and interpreting the **word of God.**

#13 In Sacred Scripture, therefore, while the truth and holiness of God always remains intact, the marvelous "condescension" of eternal wisdom is clearly shown,

- ... in that the words of God, expressed in human language,
- have been made like human discourse,
- just as **the word** of the eternal Father, when He took to Himself the flesh of human weakness, was in every way made like men.

#### **Chapter IV The Old Testament**

#14 The plan of salvation foretold by the sacred authors, recounted and explained by them, is found as the true **word of God** in the books of the Old Testament:

- these books, therefore, written under divine inspiration,
- remain permanently valuable.

*"For all that was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope"<sup>9</sup>*

The principal purpose to which the plan of the old covenant was directed was to prepare for the coming of Christ."

#15 These books, though they also contain some things which are incomplete and temporary, nevertheless, show us true divine pedagogy.

#16 God, the inspirer and author of both Testaments, wisely arranged that the New Testament be hidden in the Old and the Old be made manifest in the New....

- The books of the Old Testament with all their parts
- acquire and show forth their full meaning in the New Testament
- and in turn shed light on it and explain it.

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<sup>9</sup> Rom. 15:4

## Chapter V The New Testament

### 1. In the four-fold Gospel we truly encounter the Person of Jesus Christ

#17 The **word of God**, which is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe, is set forth and shows its power in a most excellent way in the writings of the New Testament. For when the fullness of time arrived, the **Word was made flesh** and dwelt among us in his fullness of grace and truth...

This mystery had not been manifested to other generations as it was now revealed to His holy Apostles and prophets in the Holy Spirit, so that they might

- preach the Gospel,
- stir up faith in Jesus, Christ and Lord,
- and gather together the Church.

The writings of the New Testament stand as a perpetual and divine witness to these realities.

#18 The Church has always and everywhere held and continues to hold

- that **the four Gospels** are of apostolic origin.
- For what the Apostles preached in fulfilment of the commission of Christ,
- afterwards they themselves and apostolic men, under the inspiration of the divine Spirit,
- handed on to us in writing: the foundation of faith,

namely, **the four-fold Gospel**, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

#19 Holy Mother Church has firmly and with absolute constancy held, and continues to hold, that the four Gospels just named, whose historical character the Church unhesitatingly asserts, faithfully hand on what Jesus Christ, while living among men, really did and taught for their eternal salvation until the day He was taken up into heaven<sup>10</sup>.

### 2. The role of the Church in handing on what the Apostles taught:

...After the ascension of the Lord, the Apostles handed on to their hearers what He had said and done... The sacred authors wrote the four Gospels,

- selecting some things from the many which had been
- handed on by word of mouth or in writing,
- reducing some of them to a synthesis,
- explaining some things in view of the situation of their churches...
- but always in such fashion that they told us the honest truth about Jesus.
- For their intention in writing was that ... we might know

***“the truth concerning those matters about which we have been instructed”<sup>11</sup>.***

### 3. The New Testament Canon

#20 Besides the four Gospels, the canon of the New Testament also contains

**the Epistles of St. Paul and other apostolic writings,**  
composed under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, by which...  
those matters which concern Christ the Lord are confirmed,  
his true teaching is more and more fully stated,  
the saving power of the divine work of Christ is preached,  
the story is told of the beginnings of the Church and its marvelous growth,  
and its glorious fulfilment is foretold.

For the Lord Jesus was with his Apostles as he had promised and sent them the advocate Spirit who would lead them into the fullness of truth.

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Acts 1:1

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Luke 1:2-4

## Chapter VI Scripture in the Life of the Church

### 1. Scripture and preaching

#21 The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since, especially in the sacred liturgy, she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful **the bread of life** from **the table both of God's word** and **of Christ's body**.

She has always maintained them, and continues to do so, together with sacred tradition,

- as the supreme rule of faith,
- since, as inspired by God and committed once and for all to writing,
- they impart **the word of God Himself** without change, and
- make the voice of the Holy Spirit resound in the words of the prophets and Apostles.

Therefore, like the Christian religion itself, all the preaching of the Church

- must be nourished
- and regulated by Sacred Scripture.

### 2. Scripture in the Life of all Christians

#22 Easy access to Sacred Scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful.

### 3. Theologians and the need to study Scripture

#24 The study of the sacred page is, as it were, the soul of sacred theology.

### 4. The Ministry of the Word

#25 All the clergy must hold fast to the Sacred Scriptures

- through diligent sacred reading and careful study,
- especially the priests of Christ and others, such as deacons and catechists
- who are legitimately active in **the ministry of the word...**

*"For ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ"<sup>12</sup>.*

### 5. Scripture and prayer

#25 "Prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture,

- so that God and man may talk together;
- for we speak to him when we pray;
- we hear him when we read the divine saying."

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<sup>12</sup> St Jerome