

Note to Visitors - The Rock Foundation series was created by Fr. James P. O'Bryan to introduce people to the Catholic Church and walk them through a comprehensive and meaningful RCIA program - BEFORE RCIA was actually created. This book is invaluable for parish or individual use in bringing friends and family to the full truth of the Church founded by Jesus Christ. Please enjoy this on-line sample.

ALL SCRIPTURE INSPIRED OF GOD

Some years ago, a Catholic lady proudly displayed to a priest friend the family Bible that rested for fifty-four years on the parlor table. On opening the Sacred Scripture, the priest made a surprising discovery. The front piece of the Bible was a picture of coarse-looking Catholic monks dancing gleefully around a pile of burning Bibles. The family treasure was a version of Scripture published by a Bible society with little love for the family Church. The priest showed his friend that the Books of Tobias, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, I and II Maccabees and sections of Esther (10:4-16, 24) and Daniel (3:24-90; 13,14) were missing from the Old Testament. This was not a Catholic Bible, for there are seventy-three books in the Bible. Apparently, in fifty-four years, no one had opened the book. Lives are changed because people “take and read” this Book. Untold graces of inspiration are lost to countless souls because the Book, unopened, collected the family dust! To neglect the study of the Bible is to neglect one’s personal sanctification. This is God’s story! To be ignorant of Sacred Scripture is to be ignorant of God, His Divine Son, and the Holy Spirit. Love is born out of knowledge. For the love of God we should read and study, diligently, the Sacred Scriptures!

St. Paul writes to Timothy: “All Scripture is inspired of God and is useful for teaching--for reproof, correction, and training in holiness so that the man of God may be fully competent and equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim. 3:16-17) Here the purpose of the study of the Bible is made plain--to make the Christian a perfect child of God.

The Catholic Church agrees with St. Paul that “all Scripture, inspired of God, is useful.” It is precisely for this reason that she has labored through the centuries to preserve all the inspired Scriptures of God. The Church has never admitted that the inspiration of a book can be judged by its effect upon the mind and heart of its reader. Inspiration of the book is one thing--the power to inspire the reader, another. The latter depends upon the disposition of the reader at the time of reading the Scriptures. St. Jerome taught that to read the Scriptures without the grace of the Holy Spirit is like throwing stones across a frozen pond.

The word “inspiration” comes from the Latin word *inspirare*, meaning “to breathe into.” By inspiration, we mean a supernatural power by which God so moved and stirred the sacred writers to write, that they wrote all and only that which God inspired them to write and that they conceived this in a correct way and recorded it accurately. Since Jesus commanded His Church to teach all revealed truth, it has been the Church’s obligation to acknowledge, to preserve, and to proclaim all the inspired Scriptures.

The inspired Scriptures were created over a long period of history—from the time of Moses to the Apostolic era of the Christian Church. We read in Exodus that God commanded Moses to write: “Write this down in a document as something to be remembered.” (Exod.17:14a) The sacredness of these written words Moses demonstrated by the command: “Take this scroll of the law and put it beside the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, your God, that there it may be a witness against you.” (Deut. 31:26) Inspiration did not cease with Moses but was to continue through the coming ages. His successors in the leadership of Israel added to his work. We read in Joshua: “So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day and made

Book of Samuel we read: “Samuel next explained to the people the law of royalty and wrote it in a book, which he placed in the presence of the Lord.” (1 Sam.10:25) By the time of the writing of Daniel (9:2), some sort of recognized collection of inspired writings existed among the Jews, as the author refers to “the books.” By the time of Jesus, the inspired Scriptures fell into the three divisions of the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. Jesus told His apostles: “. . . everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and psalms had to be fulfilled.” (Luke 24:44) Nowhere in these writings do we find either a description of the formation of the inspired Scriptures or a list of the inspired books. It is only through inference and use that we can deduce the books considered inspired by the Jews. We do know that at the time of Christ, the Sadducees accepted only the first five books as inspired, while the Pharisees accepted the Prophets also, and, no doubt, the Psalms.

Around the year 285 B.C., Jewish scholars living in Alexandria, Egypt, began a translation of the Sacred Scriptures of the Jews into Greek. This work ended around 100 B.C. It became known as the Greek Septuagint Bible. It contained within it all the books now declared to be inspired by the Catholic Church. The Alexandrian Jews were in close contact with Jerusalem and there was apparently no conflict with them and Jerusalem over this collection of inspired Scriptures. This Septuagint Bible became the Bible of the early Christian Church. There are about 350 quotations in the New Testament from the Old Testament--300 of these come from the Septuagint. This Bible, under Divine Providence, was a most powerful means in the conversion of the world to Christianity. Greek was the common language of the Empire. The apostles and their successors used this Bible to prove to the Jews outside of Palestine, and the God-fearing Gentiles who attended the synagogue, that Jesus was the Messiah. When we read in Acts about the people in Beroea, “Each day they studied the scriptures to see whether these things were so,” it would have been this Greek version of the Scriptures studied.

Many believe the Church’s successful use of the Septuagint Bible encouraged the Jews to reject this Greek version of the Scriptures. There existed bitter animosity between the Christians and Jews during the latter part of the first century. After the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the Pharisees, anxious to preserve all they could of the past, affirmed their list of sacred writings at the Synod of Jamnia around 90 A.D. The Pharisees established their own norm for sacred scriptures: 1. Conformity with the Law of Moses; 2. Antiquity--written no later than the time of Esdras; 3. Written in the Hebrew language; 4. Written in Palestine. They rejected as inspired: Wisdom and 2 Maccabees (they were written in Greek); Ecclesiasticus and 1 Maccabees (written after the time of Esdras); Baruch (written outside of Palestine); and the rest probably written in Aramaic--some in Palestine and others outside of it.

Whatever the decisions of the Pharisees at Jamnia, it would have had no influence upon the Church. The Church accepts the inspiration of the Old Testament on the testimony of Jesus Christ, and it accepted certain books to be inspired because the inspiration of these books was confirmed by apostolic tradition.

Jesus Christ confirmed, by his use and his teaching, the divine inspiration of the Old Testament. He taught: “Of this much I assure you: until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter of the law, not the smallest part of a letter, shall be done away with until it all comes true.” (Matt. 5:18) The Resurrected Jesus told His disciples: “Recall those words I spoke to you when I was

still with you: everything written about Me in the law of Moses and the prophets and psalms had to be fulfilled. Then He opened their minds to the understanding of the Scriptures.” (Luke 24:44-45) Because of the testimony of Jesus Christ, the Church believes the Old Testament to be inspired. The Church teaches: “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 Sacred Scripture of both the Old and New Testament are like a mirror in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks at God, from whom she has received everything, until she is brought finally to see Him as He is, face to face.” (II Vatican Council)

Tradition confirms that the early Church accepted the books found in the Septuagint as inspired Scriptures. All of these books are found quoted in the works of the early Fathers of the Church. It was not until much later that some Christians, influenced by the Jews, called into question the inspiration of certain books. St. Jerome was one such person. Reaction against his view was very strong and probably initiated the first formal statement in the Church naming the inspired books of the Bible. The Council of Hippo in 393 and the Third and Fourth Council of Carthage in 397 and 418 declared as inspired the books now found in both the Old and New Testament Catholic Bible. This decision the Councils sent to Rome, seeking the approval and confirmation of Pope Innocent I. About this time, St. Exuperius, Bishop of Toulous, wrote to Innocent I a formal letter asking him which were the inspired books of the Bible. He replied in 405 A.D., reaffirming the list given at the Council of Hippo in 393 A.D. The Council of Florence, in 1441, issued a list of inspired Scriptures identical with that of the African Councils. In 1546, the Council of Trent, repeating the decision of Florence, formally decreed all the books now found in the Catholic Bible to be the complete list of the inspired Scriptures. From that time it became a matter of Catholic Faith to hold to the inspiration of all these Scriptures.

The Protestant Reformers chose to reject the decision of the Catholic Church in favor of the decision made by the Jewish Pharisees at the Council of Jamnia. For this reason, many of these books are not found in many Bibles today. However, some editions have them in the back of the Bible listed as “doubtfully inspired.” As Catholics, we cannot accept such a decision. Luther and some other German reformers also rejected Jude, Hebrews, James and Revelation from the New Testament. Luther’s rejection of the Epistle of James for teaching that “faith without works is dead,” is well known. He referred to it as “an epistle of straw.” The Lutherans returned these works to the Bible in the 17th Century.

The enemies of the Catholic Church have often presented her unjustly as the enemy of the Bible. The history of truth denies this accusation. In truth, the Catholic Church appears in the world, in all humility, as the preserver and guardian of the Holy Scriptures. Through the Holy Spirit the Church has distinguished the weeds from the wheat and preserved, through the ages, the inspired Sacred Scriptures. She has not only preserved the Scriptures themselves, but has sought diligently to keep them from being mutilated by erroneous interpretations. The early Church demonstrated this protective attitude as we read in Peter’s Epistle: “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. There are certain passages in them hard to understand. The ignorant and the unstable distort them--just as they do the rest of Scripture--to their own ruin. You are forewarned, beloved brothers. Be on your guard lest you be led astray by the error of the wicked, and forfeit the security you enjoy.” (2 Pet. 3:15-17) St. Augustine noted: “Heresies have not arisen except when

the good Scriptures were not well understood, and what was not well understood in them was rashly and boldly asserted.”

There are sections of the Bible difficult to understand. The Bible cannot speak out when it is misunderstood, misinterpreted, or mutilated. It is through the teaching authority of the Church that the Holy Spirit guards His inspired truth. Many deny this living voice of authority in the name of the right of private interpretation of the Scriptures. Rather than build their religious lives upon a rock foundation, they prefer the sifting sands of private judgment. The Church is not opposed to personal inspiration but is against personal misinterpretation of God’s Word.

In the 4th Century, St. Athanasius, speaking about the interpretation of a Scripture wrote: “Here it is necessary--as indeed it is right and necessary in all Divine Scripture--to note the time at which the Apostle wrote, and the person about whom, and the point under consideration, lest the reader should, from ignorance, miss any of these or any like particular and thus be wide of the sense intended.” The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council wrote: “The interpreter of Sacred Scriptures, in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us, should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words Since Holy Scripture must be read and interpreted according to the same Spirit by whom it was written, no less serious attention must be given to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture if the meaning of the sacred texts is to be correctly brought to light And let them remember that prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scriptures, so that God and man may talk together, for we speak to Him when we pray; we hear Him when we read the divine sayings.” The Council Fathers ended their document with this holy hope: “Through the reading and study of the sacred books, let the word of the Lord run and be glorified (2 Thes. 3:1), and let the treasure of revelation entrusted to the Church increasingly fill the hearts of men. Just as the life of the Church grows through persistent participation in the Eucharistic mystery, so we may hope for a new surge of spiritual vitality from intensified veneration of God’s word which lasts forever.”

ROCK FOUNDATION REVISITED
LESSON ONE
ALL SCRIPTURE INSPIRED OF GOD

1. What is meant by the Inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures?
2. What Books not found in the Old Testament of the Jews and the Protestants are held to be inspired by the Catholic Church?
3. What is the Septuagint Bible?
4. What Bible did the early Church use?
5. Why did the Catholic Church accept the Books of the Septuagint Bible as inspired?
6. How did the present Bible of the Jews come to be?
7. When did the Catholic Church first declare the Bible it holds today be inspired?
8. Why does the Protestant version of the Bible differ from the Catholic version of the Bible?
9. How does the Church instruct us to interpret the Scriptures?
10. According to St. Augustine, how do heresies come to be in the Christian Community?

If you have any questions on this lesson, please list them below.