

Scripture According to the New *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

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We continue our series of excerpts from the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* with a brief survey of its views about Scripture.

The Catholic Church continues to confess a belief in the inspiration of Scripture, which is the authoritative Word of God.

Since therefore all that the inspired authors or sacred writers affirm should be regarded as armed by the Holy Spirit, we must acknowledge that the books of Scripture firmly, faithfully, and without error teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the Sacred Scripture. Par. 107.

The Catholic Church continues to grant the written and oral traditions of the church equal authority with Scripture.

In keeping with the Lord's command, the Gospel was handed on in two ways:—*orally* by the apostles who handed on, by the spoken word of their preaching, by the example they gave, by the institutions they established, what they themselves had received whether from the lips of Christ, from his way of life and his works, or whether they had learned it at the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

—*in writing* by those apostles and other men associated with the apostles, who, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, committed the message of salvation to writing. Par. 76.

The Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiment of devotion and reverence. Par. 82.

The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living, teaching office of the Church alone.... This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome. Par. 85.

The Catholic Church also allows for continuing private revelations to individuals members of the church, but it does not grant them the same authority as the teachings of the church.

Throughout the ages, there have been so-called "private" revelations, some of which have been recognized by the authority of the Church. They do not belong, however, to the deposit of the faith.

It is not their role to complete or improve Christ's definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history. Par. 67.

The Catholic Church has adopted the negative higher critical approach to Scripture. This is demonstrated by the Catholic Church's treatment of Genesis 1-3, creation, and evolution.

The question about the origins of the world and of man has been the object of many scientific studies which have splendidly enriched our knowledge of the age and dimensions of the cosmos, the development of life-forms and the appearance of man. These discoveries invite us to even greater admiration for the greatness of the Creator. Par. 283.

Among all the Scriptural texts about creation, the first three chapters of Genesis occupy a unique place. From a literary standpoint these texts may have had diverse sources. The inspired authors have placed them at the beginning of Scripture to express in their solemn language the truths of creation. Par. 289.

Creation has its own goodness and proper perfection, but it did not spring forth complete from the hands of the Creator. The universe was created in a "state of journeying" (*in statu viae*) toward an ultimate perfection yet to be attained. Par. 302.

And so we see the Holy Spirit, the principal author of Sacred Scripture, often attributing actions to God without mentioning any secondary causes. Par. 304.

Scripture presents the work of the Creator symbolically as a succession of six days of divine "work," concluded by the "rest" of the seventh day. Par. 337.

The Church, interpreting the symbolism of the biblical language in an authentic way, in the light of the New Testament and Tradition, teaches that our first parents, Adam and Eve, were constituted in an original state of holiness and justice. Par. 375.

The account of the fall in Genesis 3 uses figurative language, but affirms a primeval event, a deed that took place at the beginning of human history. Revelation gives us the certainty of faith that the whole of human history is marked by the original fault freely committed by our first parents. Par. 390.

We see little new here. The Catholic Church still affirms the inspiration and authority of Scripture, but allows the traditions of the church equal—in fact, greater authority than Scripture. The only new development is that Rome now grants opinions of scientists and critics greater leeway in setting aside the Scriptures. When critical views pass judgment on the Scriptures, the traditions of the Church set a limit on the degree to which critics can modify the teachings of Scripture. In this way the tradition of the church is the ultimate authority over doctrine just as it has always been for Rome.