

# DOGMATIC CONSTITUTION ON DIVINE REVELATION

## *DEI VERBUM*

November 18, 1965

The original schema for this constitution, entitled “The Sources of Revelation,” reflected the pre-conciliar teaching, which held that Sacred Scripture and the sacred tradition of the Church constitute two distinct sources of revelation. The Council Fathers instead declare that there is only one wellspring of divine revelation, the word of God, which is manifested both in the written word of Sacred Scripture and in truths handed down through sacred tradition. (#9)

The Council Fathers also embrace many principles of modern biblical scholarship which had been encouraged by earlier papal teaching, but never accepted by officials in the Roman Curia. Thus, they enable Catholic scholars to start catching up with their Protestant counterparts, who were never so inhibited by their Church authorities.

### **Divine inspiration in the Scriptures**

The Council Fathers explain biblical inspiration in a way that breaks from the fundamentalist understanding of earlier generations. They say that Sacred Scripture is “inspired” in the sense that God moved each of the biblical authors to express, according to his own gifts and literary style, the message that God wished to convey. Hence, the end product is the word of God, but the means of communication reflect the genius of the individual human authors. In order to understand fully what the sacred authors intended and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words, it is necessary to study the literary forms used by the authors and the times and cultures in which they lived. (#11-12)

### **Relationship between the Old and New Testaments**

Prior to the liturgical reforms mandated by the Council, Catholics almost never heard readings from the Old Testament. It was considered almost irrelevant to the understanding of the New Testament. The Council Fathers challenge that misunderstanding, saying that the Old and New Testaments are equally inspired by the same God. The books of the Old Testament acquire and show forth their full meaning in the New Testament. At the same time, the Old Testament sheds light on the New Testament and helps to explain it. (#14-16)

### **How the four Gospels were composed**

The Council Fathers challenge a misunderstanding of the Gospels, prevalent among both the faithful and the leadership of the Church, as simply historical narratives about Jesus. Recent biblical scholarship had led to a deeper understanding of how the sacred authors revealed “the truth” about Jesus through the creative process of composition, by “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, [and] explaining some things in view of the situation of their churches.” (#19)

### **Access to the Bible and collaboration**

Previously, Catholics were discouraged from reading the Bible on their own, lest they misinterpret the sacred texts. The Council Fathers encourage “easy access to Sacred Scripture” for all the faithful. Also, Catholic scholars had been discouraged from collaborating with Protestant scholars. Such collaboration quickly became the norm, with the Council’s blessing.  
(#22)