

The Senses of Scripture

a. **Literal sense:** The sense which the human author directly intended and which his words convey.

1. It is a question of the direct intention of the human author.
2. It is a sense conveyed by the author's words.
3. The sense conveyed by the words and the intention of the author cannot be separated.
4. All other senses are based on the literal sense.

b. **Spiritual Sense:** The realities and events contained in Sacred Scripture can be signs. The spiritual sense has three dimensions:

1. **Allegorical sense:** how the events of Sacred Scripture, particularly the Old Testament, signify Christ: For example, the Passover lamb is a sign that foreshadows Christ's death on the cross; Christ is the new and perfect Lamb of God; or crossing of Red Sea to the promised land is a sign that foreshadows the resurrection and the opening of the gates of Heaven, thereby giving us the hope of everlasting life; Christ conquered sin and death.
2. **Moral sense:** Words and events in Sacred Scripture teach us to do what is true, good, and right; they teach us how to act justly. For example, the Ten Commandments are specific moral rules. Or, the Lord's example of mercy and compassion provide moral teaching.
3. **Anagogical sense:** (from the Greek *anagoge* meaning "leading") The realities and events in Sacred Scripture have eternal significance, leading us toward our true homeland. For example, the Church is a sign of the heavenly Jerusalem, or the Last Supper and Mass is a sign of the heavenly banquet described in Revelation.

The Three "I" s - Inspiration, Inerrancy, and Interpretation

Inspiration

"For Holy Mother Church relying on the faith of the apostolic age, accepts as sacred and canonical the books of the Old and the New Testaments, whole and entire, with all their parts, on the grounds that, 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."

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

"Since, therefore, all that the inspired authors or sacred writers affirm should be regarded

as affirmed 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 Scriptures." *Dei Verbum*, #11

Inerrancy

Sacred Scripture is true in its content and conveys the truth of God's word. For example, each of the four Gospels describes the scene when St. John the Baptist baptizes Jesus in the Jordan River; each account is slightly different in wording, but without error in content and meaning. The same is true for the Last Supper account.

Interpretation (refers to official interpretation, not one's personal meaning)

"Since Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted with its divine authorship in mind, no less attention must be devoted to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture, taking into account the Tradition of the entire Church and the analogy of faith, if we are to derive their true meaning from the sacred texts." *Dei Verbum* #12

"All that has been said about the manner of interpreting Scripture is ultimately subject to the judgment of the church which exercises the divinely conferred commission and ministry of watching over and interpreting the Word of God." *Dei Verbum*, #12

"But 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. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. Yet this Magisterium (i.e. teaching authority of the Church) is not superior to the Word of God, but it is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it. At the divine command and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it listens to this devoutly, guards it with dedication, and expounds it faithfully." *Dei Verbum*, #10

Three criteria must be followed for interpreting Sacred Scripture:

1. **Be attentive to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture.** While different books comprise Scripture, all of the books and their contents are important in discerning the meaning and understanding the revelation.

2. **Read the Scripture within the living Tradition of the whole Church.** The words of Sacred Scripture are living words. "...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 Scripture."

3. **Be attentive to the analogy of faith.** "By analogy of faith we mean the coherence of the truths of faith among themselves and within the whole plan of Revelation."

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Establishing the Canon of Sacred Scripture

The word *canon* means reed, refers to norm of revealed truth or rule of faith.

Old Testament:

Oldest texts date to about 1200 BC

Septuagint: Formally called the *Interpretatio secundum septuaginta seniores*. In Exodus, 24:1-9, 70 elders go to Moses to receive the Law. At first, the Septuagint referred to only the Pentateuch (or Torah), but now refers to the whole Greek translation of the Old Testament. The Pentateuch probably was translated into Greek during the reign of Alexander the Great (c. 333 BC); all of the Old Testament was completed and translated around 150 - 100 BC. Jewish tradition holds that 70 scholars individually translated the Hebrew texts into Greek, and, when they compared them, they agreed exactly. Note that the books written after the initial Septuagint were accepted by both the Jews as well as the early Christian community.

New Testament:

Old Latin: Designates the translation prior to and independent of St. Jerome's translation. This was probably done in North Africa around AD 170 - 200.

The early Church Fathers refer to specific books of the New Testament in their writings. The Muratorian Fragment (a papyrus fragment c. AD 150 named after its discoverer, L. A. Muratori, who published it in 1740) contains a listing of the 27 books of the New Testament.

- 350 St. Athanasius set the canon of Sacred Scripture, the Septuagint (Old Testament) and the 27 books of the New Testament. (*Paschal Epistle*, 367 AD): "These are the sources of salvation, for the thirsty may drink deeply of the words to be found here. In these alone is the doctrine of piety recorded. Let no one add to them or take anything away from them."
- 382 Pope St. Damasus commissioned St. Jerome to translate the Scriptures into Latin from the Greek and Hebrew (Aramaic) texts. St. Jerome produced the *Vulgate* version.
- 393 Council of Hippo and III Carthage (397) accepted this canon of Sacred Scripture.
- 405 Pope Innocent I wrote to Exuperius, Bishop of Toulouse, stating this was the set canon.
- 1441 The Council of Florence (*Decree to the Jacobites*) again affirmed the 73 of the Old and New Testaments as the official canon.
- 1534 Luther translated the Bible into German. In so doing, he made 3000 mistranslations.

(Note that at least 14 other German translations already existed.) He changed the canon of Sacred Scripture, eliminating seven books of the Old Testament: Wisdom, I & II Maccabees, Judith, Tobit, Sirach, and Baruch. He called these “the apocrypha.”

Moreover, he categorized the books of the New Testament:

- a. God's work of salvation: John, Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, I Peter, and I John
- b. Other canonical works: Synoptics, Acts, Pauline Epistles, 2 Peter, 2 John
- c. Non-canonical: Hebrews, James, Jude, Revelation, and various Old Testament texts.

1545 The Council of Trent affirmed again the canon of 73 books of Sacred Scripture, in response to Luther’s omission of the seven Old Testament books.

The Council of Trent tried to end abuses of the Bible, due to improper interpretation or poor translations, like Luther’s. No standard version existed. Some texts were inaccurate. Liturgical books contained incomplete quotations. There was much arbitrariness in preaching and interpretation. The *Vulgate* was accepted as the official translation.

First official Catholic English Translation: *Douay-Rheims*: In 1593, Cardinal Allen, an Oxford Scholar, began translating the Bible at the English College beginning in Douay, France, moving to Rheims, France, and returning to Douay. Because of lack of funds, the translation was not published until 1609-10.

First official Protestant English Translation: *King James*: In 1604, James I ordered a translation of the Bible to be as close to original Greek and Hebrew texts, without marginal notes, and to be used at all English Protestant churches. The committee used various translations (including Luther and Wycliffe) and therefore, the translation was inaccurate. There were over 2600 errors in translation. Also, the canon did not include the 7 books of the Old Testament deleted by Martin Luther.

1943 Pope Pius XII issued *Divino Afflante Spiritu* which challenged scholars to go back to original texts, refer to literary styles, and provide good modern translations. Archeology, ethnology, and other sciences were used to discover the literary forms of writers.

1966 *New Jerusalem Bible* - French scholarship.

Revised Standard Version

1970 *New American Bible* - American scholarship at Catholic University.

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The History of Israel & Early Christianity

1850 BC	Abraham
1250 BC	Moses and the Exodus event Oldest texts of Sacred Scripture appear. The Torah is attributed to Moses.
1010 - 961 BC	King David
971 - 931 BC	King Solomon
931 BC	Israel split between the two sons of Solomon: A. The Northern Kingdom (Israel) ruled by Jeroboam I (931 - 910) Elijah (870 - 845) Elisha (845 - 800) Amos (765 - 754) Hosea (758 - 725) B. The Southern Kingdom (Judah) ruled by Rehoboam I (931 - 913) Jonah (781) Isaiah (760 - 673) Micah (738 - 698)
721 BC	Assyria attacked; the Northern Kingdom is conquered, and the Southern Kingdom became a vassal state. Isaiah (760 - 673) Micah (738 - 698) Jeremiah (650 - 582) Zephaniah (640 - 626) Ezekiel (620 - 570) Nahum (658 - 615)
610 BC	Babylonians conquered the Assyrians and Northern Kingdom became a vassal state.
601 BC	Babylonians fought the Egyptians who controlled Judah; the Southern Kingdom became a vassal of Babylon. Habakkuk (608 - 598)

- 587 BC The Babylonians destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem.
- Daniel (620 - 540, in 605 taken to Babylon)
Obadiah (590, remained in Jerusalem after the fall)
- 535 BC Cyrus, King of Persia, conquered Babylon. The Temple was rebuilt in 515.
- Zechariah (522 - 509)
Haggai (520)
Malachi (465)
Joel (450)
- 333 BC Alexander the Great of Greece conquered the territory.
- Books of Maccabees and the Wisdom Literature were written.
- The Old Testament was completed about 150 BC.
- 48 BC Julius Caesar gave control to King Herod, albeit as a puppet king.
- AD 1 Jesus was born. (AD 525, Dionysius Exiguus, a Scythian monk of a Roman monastery, changed the dating system of Diocletian and goofed by 4 years. Some scholars believe Jesus was probably born between 4BC and 1AD.)
- AD 33 Jesus was Crucified under Pontius Pilate and rose from the dead on Easter. 40 days later, Jesus ascended into Heaven, and 10 days later (50 days after Easter), the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles at Pentecost.
- AD 35 St. Stephen was martyred. Saul, the Pharisee, encountered the Risen Christ and became St. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles.
- AD 42 St. Paul meets the apostles in Jerusalem. St. James the Greater was martyred in Jerusalem. St. Peter traveled to Rome, accompanied by his secretary St. Mark.
- AD 46-48 St. Paul and St. Barnabas traveled on their First Missionary Journey.
- AD 48 St. Peter returned from Rome for the Council of Jerusalem to decide the questions surrounding the evangelization of the Gentiles raised by St. Paul and St. James the Lesser.
- AD 50-53 St. Paul conducted his Second Missionary Journey. After this journey, St. Paul wrote his earliest epistles, namely I and 2 Thessalonians.
- AD 54-58 St. Paul conducted his Third Missionary Journey.
- AD 57 St. Peter returned to Rome.

- AD 60 St. Paul was taken to Rome for trial before the Emperor.

- AD 67-68 St. Peter and St. Paul were martyred in Rome.

- Jews begin revolt in Jerusalem. Christians flee rather than remain in the city.

- AD 68 The Qumran community (based near the Dead Sea) was destroyed by the Roman 10th Legion.

- AD 70 The Roman Army destroyed Jerusalem and razed the Temple.

Dating the New Testament:

Biblical Scholarship of the 1900s posited a time lines as follows:

- Before the Fall of Jerusalem: Pauline Epistles

- AD 70 St. Mark’s Gospel

- AD 70-80 St. Luke’s Gospel, St. Matthew’s Gospel, Acts

- AD 90 St. John’s Gospel, Revelation

Other epistles of the New Testament would also be written during this post-Fall period.

Sadly, some “scholars” even suggest that the New Testament was compiled by the early Church after legalization in AD 313.

Traditional Biblical Scholarship of the Church Fathers and Recent Archeological Evidence:

The early Church Fathers all attributed the New Testament texts to the authors for which they are named. Also, they believed the texts to be written prior to the Fall of Jerusalem.

The discovery of the “Dead Sea Scrolls” in 1947 has shed new light which corroborates the Traditional Biblical Scholarship of the church.

With the approach of the Roman Tenth Legion, the Qumran community hid their library in various caves. These caves were discovered in 1947, and the various scrolls became known as the “Dead Sea Scrolls.” Given the fragments of the gospels and other books of the New Testament found in Cave VII, which were identified in the 1970s, many scholars— Scripture, Archeologists, and Papyrologists— have concluded that the New Testament was completed by AD 68. Moreover, other fragments now housed at various colleges indicate, for instance, that St. Matthew’s Gospel existed by AD 60. Remember, St. Paul refers repeatedly to “the gospels” in his epistles.

Scholars who defend this Traditional Biblical Scholarship include Scott Hahn, Fr. Jose O’Callaghan, Rev. N. T. Wright, Rev. John Robinson, and Carsten Peter Thiede.