

Session 1: Introduction

- **Word of God = the 2nd Person of the Most Holy Trinity.** For example, in the very first words of the Gospel of John, we read, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with and towards God, **and the Word was God.** He was in the beginning with God...(Jn 1:1-2).
- As God, as a divine Person, the Word is eternal: **the Eternal Word.** However, **the Eternal Word entered creation** by means of the **Incarnation**, which means “**enfleshing**”. For example, in the beginning of the Gospel of John, we read, “And the **Word became flesh** and dwelt among us (Jn 1:14).”
- At the Incarnation, He was given the Name of **Jesus (Greek) = Yeshua (Aramaic) = Yehoshua (Hebrew)**, which means “**Yahweh saves**”, thus indicating both His **identity** and **mission**.
- Word of God in Hebrew is **Memra**. Interestingly, the targums understood **all actions of God to be performed through the Memra**, Who mysteriously seemed to be a **personification of God**, as, for example, “Thus says the Word of the Lord.” This is insightful, as it seems to intuit a plurality of Persons in the One True God, as with the Most Holy Trinity.
- Word of God in Greek is **Logos**. Greek philosophy, being quasi-religious, had a mystical awe for the **Uncreated Logos**, Who was the **divine Reason/Thought** guiding creation. This is insightful, as the Uncreated Logos seems to be a **personification of God**. Therefore, even the pagan Greeks seemed to intuit a plurality of Persons in God, as with the Most Holy Trinity, Who can be understood as **Intellect ← Mutual Will → Reason/Thought**.
- We **know** the divine Person of Word of God **by revelation**, by God revealing Himself to man, **by the twofold means of the oral Word and the written Word.**

oral Word – Tradition, that is, the teaching of the Catholic Church

Word of God

written Word – Bible, that is, the Sacred Scriptures (Ss)

- The written Word derives from the oral Word **like a circle within a circle.**
- In the 4th century at the Council of Hippo (393 AD), the Catholic bishops in union with the pope, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, **infallibly determined** which writings were divinely inspired and thus **infallibly written**, and a **bare minimum requirement for inclusion** was whether or not the information within the writings was **within the Tradition**.

What does “divinely inspired” mean?

- The Greek word **theopneustos**, used by St. Paul, literally means “**God-breathed**” (2 Tim 3:16).
- **Ss = the words of God in the words of men**
- God, specifically the Holy Spirit, Who is 3rd Person of the Most Holy Trinity, is the **principal** author, while man is the **instrumental** author, **writing only that which the Holy Spirit wants written, and not a word or phrase more.**

What does the word “Bible” mean?

- “collection of books”

How many books are in the Bible?

- 73 (46 OT + 27 NT)

Does Ss contain any errors?

- Ss is **fully inerrant**, which means **absolutely without error**, because the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, does not speak error.
- Full inerrancy means that there are no errors in Ss, such that what is written pertaining to faith or morals, **or even geography, history, and natural science**, is true and correct (Council of Trent, Vatican I, *Humani Generis, Divino Afflante Spiritu*).
- Full inerrancy pertains to the **original writings**, which were written in either Hebrew or Greek.
- Though there are not errors in the original writings, which no longer exist due to disintegration, there might be **human errors** due to the following:
 1. copy error
 2. translation error
 3. interpretation error
- Ss does have **seeming contradictions**, which **seem to be contradictions**. However, study, reflection, and prayer, especially by Ss scholars, is needed to understand why these are not actually contradictions.

How should we interpret SS?

- Always seek first to know the **literal-historical meaning**, which is the **plain meaning**.
- However, there are also deeper meanings to Ss called **spiritual meanings**, specifically:
 1. **Christological** – How does it relate to Christ the Head or to His Mystical Body the Church?
 2. **moral** – How does it relate to Christian living?
 3. **eschatological** – How does it relate to the eternity, to the four last things?

What are the safeguards to interpreting Ss correctly?

1. Read a passage of Ss in **context**, taking into account the whole situation relating to a given passage, including the literary genre.
2. Read Ss according to the **canonical approach**, reading Ss as an integrated whole, remembering that all of the books are interrelated, and are written by the same principal author, Who is the Holy Spirit.
3. **Read Ss in accord with Tradition**, which has been faithfully preserved in the teachings of the Church, especially by means of the Liturgy, iconography, Creeds, Church Councils, papal teachings, and catechisms. Essentially, Tradition serves as **“lines on the playing field”** with regard to proper interpretation. **To read Ss apart from Tradition is dangerous to your salvation**, as Ss reveals, “There are some things in them (St. Paul’s letters) hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures (2 Pet 3:16).”
4. Always remember that Ss is **internally consistent** because the Holy Spirit is not confused!

