

An Introduction to  
Sacred Scripture



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# Lesson 1 Revelation: Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture

## What is Revelation and Why Do We Need It?

### *Truths beyond human reason*

**Divine Revelation** is the term for the truths that God has revealed to man about Himself over the course of time. Strictly speaking, Divine Revelation consists only of those truths which not even the brightest men could have come to on their own. Such truths include: “God is a Trinity”, “The Second Person of that Trinity became man”, “The Blessed Virgin Mary was immaculately conceived”, and many others. The entirety of Revelation is also called the **Deposit of Faith**, which is the entire ‘deposit’ of truths given to man by God.

### *Truths provable by human reason*

In another way, and speaking more loosely, men often extend the term “Divine Revelation” to include even certain truths which are in themselves capable of proof through human reason. Examples of such truths are these: “God exists”, “God is eternal”, “God is unchanging”, and many others. It may surprise you to hear that human reason can *prove* such truths.

- You may be thinking, “Well, OF COURSE, God exists! Only the fool says there is no God. We do not need to *prove* it.” To this, St. Thomas Aquinas would say, “Well, be very, very careful about the difference between *believing* and *knowing*. Knowing, *strictly speaking*, is when we can prove something with a very strict proof, a proof which cannot be denied. If we cannot do that, then we probably do not really *know*, but merely believe. And in this case, to believe is a very good thing! That is what the virtue of Faith is for.”
- Or, perhaps on the other hand, you are thinking just the opposite: “Nobody *can prove* God exists. We just *believe* such things without a proof.” Again, St. Thomas would answer that, believe it or not, such truths as “God exists” and “God is good” are indeed strictly provable by human reason. In fact, even the great non-Catholic philosopher Aristotle even proved such things<sup>1</sup> over three hundred years before Our Lord became a man! St. Thomas, some 1,500 years later (he lived in the 1200s), developed and expanded these proofs of Aristotle in his famous “Five Ways” (five proofs for the existence of God using human reason alone). He gives these proofs near the beginning of his beautiful masterpiece, the *Summa Theologiae*.<sup>2</sup>

### ***God, in His mercy, has told us both kinds of truths – those knowable and unknowable by human reason!***

BUT: Just because many truths about God are indeed knowable (provable) by human reason itself, this does not mean *every* human being can follow or understand such proofs. No! In fact, the blunt truth of the matter is that *very few* people have the brilliance and persistence of Aristotle. In that same *Summa Theologiae*, St. Thomas points out that one would have to spend his whole life studying and contemplating the ultimate questions, as the philosophers did, in order to uncover a great deal of the truths which are knowable by reason (like “God exists”). Most people do not have the intelligence, time, interest, or education to dedicate themselves to this effort. Thus, St. Thomas says in a different work, “Those who wish to undergo such a labor [of study and investigation] for the mere love of knowledge are few [in number], even though God has inserted into the minds of men a natural appetite for knowledge.”<sup>3</sup>

In fact, the saint warns that the situation is even more bleak. He adds that even those few bright men who can and do

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<sup>1</sup> In his *Metaphysics*, Book 12, Chapters 6 to 10

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, *Qu 2, Article 3*

<sup>3</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gentiles*, 1.4.3.

give their whole lives to study still end up with a great number of errors mixed in with the truths they come to.<sup>4</sup> (St. Thomas would, however, be the first to admit that Aristotle was an *extremely rare exception* – he had very few errors in his conclusions.)

**In other words, *practically speaking* (not theoretically speaking), it is impossible for men *on their own* to come to know even the most basic humanly knowable truths about God.**

***Since the vast majority of men cannot even attain to the most basic truths about God, how do we get out of this bind?***

Since then, *practically speaking*, the vast majority of men cannot even prove there is a God (and many other truths which are in themselves provable by human reason), and further, if even the very few bright men that make the attempt end up with a mixture of truth and error, then how can man possibly come to know the ultra-important truths that God wants man to know? How can man possibly know, love, and serve his Creator, and save his immortal soul?

Divine Revelation comes to the rescue! God not only has revealed those things that no man could ever possibly figure out (again, such truths as “God is a Trinity”), but has also given us to know even the things that *are* within the reach of human reason (God exists. He is from eternity. He is unchanging.)

Now that we know the two types of truths that God makes known to us, we can ask, “But where do we FIND these truths? How are they made known to us?”

## The Two Sources of Divine Revelation

Divine Revelation has come to us through two divine wellsprings: **Sacred Tradition** and **Sacred Scripture**, both of which are equal in importance and authority. Scripture and Tradition are “two sides of the same coin”; the whole of Revelation is contained therein. Most Catholics are aware that Sacred Scripture contains God’s word. Many, however, are not very familiar with the meaning and sources of Sacred Tradition.

### ***First Source of Divine Revelation: Sacred Tradition***

#### What is Sacred Tradition?

While Sacred Scripture is the Word of God contained in the Bible, Sacred Tradition refers to the truths which have been verbally passed down from Christ through the Apostles, but which are not directly in Scripture. Jesus commanded His Apostles *to preach* (and not just to write) what they heard from Him, saying, “He that heareth you, heareth Me.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, the Apostles spoke with Divine Authority, and their teachings were delivered to the faithful *by preaching*, guided by the Holy Ghost. Jesus also instructed the Apostles to carry out the actions – what we most commonly think of when referring to *traditions* – which He instituted. This includes the Sacraments such as Baptism: “Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”<sup>6</sup>

You may know that Sacred Scripture is the living Word of God made known to man, preserved from error by the Holy Ghost. Sacred Tradition is also, like Sacred Scripture, preserved from error by the same gift of the Holy Ghost as it is passed down across generations. Protestantism rejects Sacred Tradition, wrongly claiming that Sacred Scripture is the only source of Revelation. Because we live in times which are ever shadowed and tainted by the errors of the Protestant Revolt (which falsely claims a deposit of faith in “Scripture alone”), many Catholics are unfortunately influenced by these Protestant heresies. We must understand how essential Sacred Tradition is to the Faith, and how it is the Holy Ghost Who,

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<sup>4</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae, Qu 1, Article 1*

<sup>5</sup> Luke 10:16 Douay Rheims

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 28:19 Douay Rheims

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Linus and Claudia, and all the brethren, salute thee. The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.

Having completed what he needed to tell them in the Epistle, Saint Paul signs off much in the way we may sign off a letter today. It cannot be said that *his intention* was to write and “publish” a formal document of Church teaching. Nonetheless, by the hand of Providence working in the lives of the Apostles, that is what we have!

## Above all, Scripture is True

You may have noticed that in modern times, certain skeptics who may be atheists, Protestants, or even Catholics have tried to re-interpret the truths contained in Scripture as mere *symbols, opinions, myths, misunderstandings* (historical, scientific, etc.), or some combination of these. (This attempt at twisting Sacred Scripture is not new; we have already shown what Luther and Calvin did. Also, thinkers of the ‘enlightenment’ including Thomas Jefferson, one of America’s “Founding Fathers”, promoted these false ideas, and what we see now is the impact.) For example, in order to push a theory of evolution (which, as you will see if you study biology with us, is not only theologically but scientifically baseless), they will say that the events in Genesis are something like a useful fable which is not to be taken literally. Or to bolster a sense of materialism (the idea that only sensible things matter), they will introduce doubts as to whether the many miracles of God recorded in Scripture *really* happened, or whether some other natural explanation could be found. Likewise, they will over-emphasize the humanity of the individual Apostles or other authors in order to propose that their limited knowledge (or that of their culture) implies a limitation on the accuracy of Scripture itself.

What can we say to all of this? Ultimately, it demonstrates a grave lack of trust in God and the power of His Providence! Of course, it is true that Scripture contains a rich variety of different elements. There is a difference between history (for example, the Books of Kings) and poetry (the Book of Psalms), parables (such as those told by Christ) and records (such as the genealogy of Christ). And as we have discussed, it is a gift to the Church that the diverse histories and perspectives of the inspired human writers of Scripture have been united into one enduring testimony. But this does nothing to diminish the fact that Scripture is entirely *true and reliable* through the activity of the Holy Ghost in the lives of the authors to safeguard them from error even while contributing their own personal voices. We ought to trust completely that the truths contained within the contents – the facts in a history, the persons in a genealogy, the moral of a parable – are perpetually true where they are properly understood and interpreted. This responsibility, as we will discuss shortly, ultimately resides with the Magisterium of the Church.

## The Magisterium and the Bible

The period of formal, public Divine Revelation ended with the death of the last Evangelist, Saint John. By that time (about 100 A.D.), the Church had received all that is contained in the Deposit of Faith. Although many doctrines and teachings of the Faith have been *expounded* and *promulgated* since this time – for example, through the many Church Councils across history – this is not new Revelation, but rather a continuous interpretation and realization of the truths already given to the Church within the Deposit of Faith.

The Bible as we know it today has two parts: The **Old Testament**, composed of 45 books, and the **New Testament**, which is composed of 27 books. All together there are 40 identified authors of these books, who wrote each in their own style, using their own intellect, but always were inspired by the Holy Ghost to write the Word of God perfectly and without error. The timeline of the writing of Scripture covers 4100 years from the **Pentateuch** of Moses (first five books of the Bible) to St. John the Evangelist. But why 45 books in the Old Testament? Why not 32 or 134? Why 27 books in the New? Let us answer such questions now.

### ***Who decided what books were inspired by the Holy Ghost? That is, who put the Bible together?***

You might be wondering, if many of these books were originally addressed to particular communities, how did they become part of one universally recognized Bible? This was the responsibility of the teaching authority of the Church,



called the **Magisterium**. The Catholic Church decided what books are included in the canon of Sacred Scripture. This was done in **393 A.D. by the Catholic Council of Hippo**. Once the formal list was made at the Council, no books could be added to the Bible nor taken away. (This term *canon*, by the way, is used by the Church when declaring that some people are saints. This is because those names are then listed in the *canon* of Saints; their names are added to a formal list of known saints.)

### ***Why did the Church need to do this?***

The importance of the Council of Hippo becomes very clear when one considers that by the end of the first century, there were many other books and letters circulating around the Church which were of very questionable orthodoxy, or, even if they seemed orthodox, the most important question remained: were these books *inspired by the Holy Ghost*?

These were three classes of books/letters at the time:

1. the books ‘acknowledged’ as Canonical (certainly inspired by God)
2. books ‘disputed’ or ‘controverted’ (men were not sure)
3. books declared ‘spurious’<sup>14</sup> (definitely not inspired by God).

Of the middle category, there were some that were later decided to be inspired, and others that were excluded by the Council of Hippo. Remember, just because a book was decided *not to have been inspired*, does not mean that it was evil. In fact, some of these books are good and edifying works, which we still have today.

The third category was full of some works that were superstitious, foolish, puerile, or which were impious in their writings; these were, of course, not included among works declared inspired. Some of these writings still exist, but most have perished.

The Council of Hippo was convened due to the great need for the books of Scripture to be listed. In the early Church, as persecution raged in Rome, many emperors would try to make Christians give the texts of the Bible to the authorities. To do so would be, in effect, to deliver the sacred writings to be destroyed. Thus, there were many martyrs who laid down their life rather than hand over the sacred texts. This was a worthy cause for which to die – but it was even more important to ensure what books were actually part of Scripture, and which were not!

There were two more Councils that followed:

- The Council of Carthage, in 397 A.D., which confirmed and approved the decrees of Hippo, re-affirming the canon of Sacred Scripture once and for all;
- and another Council of Carthage in 419 A.D., over which Saint Augustine presided. This Council sent the list of Scriptural books to the Bishop of Rome, Pope Boniface, to be confirmed. This was the final conclusion of the discussion of which books were included, and which were excluded, from Scripture – and thank God for the security this brought to the Church!

This is important to remember as we will see (in a later lesson) that certain books were later impiously removed from the Bible by Protestant heresiarchs. While the Church has wisely helped to confirm *which* books belong to Scripture, the text of Scripture itself is perfect and not to be changed by human hands:

For the doctrine of the faith which God has revealed is put forward not as some philosophical discovery capable of being perfected by human intelligence, but as a divine deposit committed to the spouse of Christ [the Church] to be faithfully protected and infallibly promulgated. Hence, too, that meaning of the sacred dogmas is ever to be

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<sup>14</sup> **spurious:** fake or false

maintained which has once been declared by holy mother church, and there must never be any abandonment of this sense under the pretext or in the name of a more profound understanding.<sup>15</sup>

## Protestants and Their “Bibles”

Today there is a false notion that the Bible is something that Catholics may use or read, but which is firstly “Protestant”. Nothing could be farther from the truth! This false belief may come from the fact that Protestants believe the only divine revelation available to man is the Bible – not Sacred Tradition. In addition, this teaching comes from Luther’s heresy of “Scripture alone” (Sola Scriptura). Protestants actually have nothing but their so-called “bibles.” (We put “bible” in quotes because what Protestants today wrongly call “the bible” is not the bible at all. Their “bibles” have many books missing, and the texts of the books which remain are badly corrupted!)

Protestants cling to their “bibles” and feel that without a bible they could not be saved. In fact, most Protestants do not believe in the necessity (or existence) of an *authoritative* teaching Church structure (such as the hierarchy of the Catholic Church). “The bible and the bible alone” is what saves, according to these heretics. What they call their “churches” are more of socially organized support structures; they do not really look upon their “pastors” as having any real authority.

But if Protestants were really correct in their claims that men really need a bible to be saved, **and not an authoritative teaching church**, then we ask Protestants these questions:

- How did men save their souls during the first three centuries after Christ – that is, during the centuries before the Church decided exactly which books constituted the Bible? If salvation is really from the bible, *how could men save their souls when the Bible did not yet even exist?*
- Even after the question of “which books were inspired” was definitively answered by the Council of Hippo in 393 A.D., there were twelve additional centuries before printing was invented in the 1500s. Thus, for 1,500 years after Christ, most people had no access to printed books! *How then, could men save their souls when they had no access to the Bible?*
- But the situation is even worse, for even beyond the 1500s, the average person could not read! Thus, even if there had been one bible in every home, *how could men save their souls when they could not read?* Or what about a large percentage of the world (for example, the Native Americans) who still had no bible translated into their native language?

Clearly then, Protestants are wrong in their claims that salvation primarily comes from reading and self-interpreting the bible. So what is the answer? Did God abandon those children who did not have a Bible and could not memorize or read Scripture themselves? By no means! St. Paul teaches that faith “*comes from hearing*” (Romans 10:17). It is the living, teaching voice of the *authoritative Church* which helps men save their souls. Sermons, plays, the sacred liturgies, processions, stories, stained glass windows, catechism classes: these are some of the many valid and beautiful means by which the Church teaches the whole community of the faithful.

## Only the Catholic Church Can Authoritatively Interpret Scripture

As we have already seen, the Bible is a Catholic book. Further, not only did the Catholic Church definitively decide which books constitute the canon of Sacred Scripture, but also the Church is the ONLY AUTHORITY on earth which can decide what the text of Scripture means. Countless arguments and fights have arisen through the centuries about the meanings of texts. The Protestants set out to interpret the texts themselves – *each man for himself*. This results in what one would expect: literally millions of different private interpretations, giving rise to hundreds of thousands of Protestant “churches” or denominations.

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<sup>15</sup> (Council Fathers, 1868)

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invention of the printing press coincided with the Protestant Revolt, which led to the perfect storm: Protestants could “translate”, print, and disseminate their own heretical version of the Scriptures (as we shall read about shortly below).

This sudden widespread *physical* accessibility to the Bible, however, did not mean that the Scriptures suddenly became widely accessible to the *intellect*! Widespread access to the Bible, including to the unlearned, or those who had been influenced by Protestantism, was and continues to be a real danger. As has always been the case, the Scriptures must be taught and expounded upon, especially for the uneducated or vulnerable, both through the good sermons of learned priests and through faithful catechesis! We are assured by the saints, that Scripture is difficult, even for learned and holy persons:

- St. Peter himself warns us: “*As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are certain things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction.*” (2 Peter 3:16) Here St. Peter is admitting how difficult it is to understand the great mind and lofty thoughts of St. Paul. All who attempt to interpret the scriptures themselves must keep in mind this solemn warning from the first pope!
- The great St. Augustine also said: “*There are more things in the Bible which I cannot understand than those I can understand.*” This is a Father and Doctor of the Church, and a brilliant man admitting this! What about the rest of us?

This is not to dissuade the average Catholic from reading and contemplating the Scriptures, but it is something to keep in mind as one studies and contemplates Holy Writ. After all, the primary author of the Bible is God, thus it is completely free from error and infinitely rich and complex. A passage of Scripture may have many meanings and shades of meaning, and it is not for us to invent more or remove any. In reading and interpreting Scripture, we should rely on the teaching and Tradition of the Church as our safeguard. Further, this is why it is important to have learned priests and rigorous seminary studies! It is through the Church that God’s word becomes accessible to man.

In any case, the entire beautiful order of the Middle Ages – the peace, unity, holiness and acceptance of the Church as a living, authoritative, teaching Mother – was about to be fractured.

## Martin Luther

This book you are reading right now is designed to give you an introduction to Sacred Scripture. But both Luther and his partners in heresy (Calvin and others) did so much harm in the area of Sacred Scripture, that we really need to take a peek at both of them. These men twisted the Sacred Scriptures into a whole new series of false “bible” versions.

But you cannot fully understand either what these men did to the True Bible or why they did it, without reading about their lives and heresies. For the remainder of this lesson, we will discuss Luther; and in the next lesson we will introduce Calvin, Zwingli and Knox.

Martin Luther (born 1483, died 1546) was born into an unhappy German peasant home. Because of a traumatic experience he had while caught in a frightening thunderstorm one day, the very scrupulous<sup>32</sup> Luther decided to enter the Augustinian order, though it seems he may not have had a genuine vocation. Luther was extremely plagued by scrupulosity throughout his life, and this was his main source of suffering, which he



**Martin Luther**

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b7/Martin\\_Luther\\_by\\_Cranach\\_restoration.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b7/Martin_Luther_by_Cranach_restoration.jpg) Lucas Cranach the Elder, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

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<sup>32</sup> **scrupulous:** conscientious and exact; painstaking. synonym: meticulous. Often scrupulous is used in a negative sense, to describe people that are *overly* concerned and almost neurotic about committing sin, thinking that they commit sin in just about everything they do.

never overcame while in the monastery. Luther was ordained an Augustinian priest in 1507, later rising in the ranks of that order in importance and duties. By 1515, he had obtained a doctorate degree and had a very busy life. Over these years he began to slacken in his adherence to the Augustinian Rule of Life. He began to sin, first a little, then quickly escalating in number and kind. In spite of his scruples, Martin fell into his despair and stopped resisting sin. This is one major reason behind his heretical ‘theology’ of sin and grace. As with all heretics, Luther had to devise a ‘system of theology’ that justified his actions and thinking, instead of conforming his life to the laws of Christ.

### ***Luther tries one extreme to overcome his sins***

When a man has a vice which he wants to overcome, the Church has always taught that the man must strike a balance. The man must, at one and the same time, completely trust and rely upon God’s mercy and power, realizing one’s own efforts are useless without God giving power and value to them; BUT AT THE SAME TIME, the man must indeed make efforts to humbly use all the means the Church recommends (e.g., avoiding the occasions of sin, confession, Mass, prayers, sacramentals).

But what happens if a man does not strike this healthy balance? He almost certainly will “go wrong” in various ways when trying to overcome sin. For example, if he does not humbly rely upon God’s mercy and realize that his own unaided human efforts are useless, he will probably instead wrongly think that it all depends upon him and his own efforts. He might then “work his tail off” trying to overcome vice *by his own power*, by means of prayer, penance, fasting, etc. But all of these things – although necessary and good in themselves – become evil and worse than useless when a man does them thinking that it is his own efforts and not God’s power and acceptance, which makes these works powerful and valuable. They are, in fact, works of pride.

This is precisely the first trap that Luther fell into. He was already habitually breaking the vow he had taken to live by the Augustinian rule of priestly life. The 1917 Catholic Encyclopedia article on Luther says:

Like every victim of scrupulosity, he saw nothing in himself but wickedness and corruption. God was (for Luther) the minister of wrath and vengeance. Luther’s sorrow for sin was devoid of humble charity and childlike confidence in the pardoning mercy of God and Jesus Christ. This anger of God, which pursued him like his shadow (so Luther imagined) could only be averted<sup>33</sup> by "his own righteousness", by the "efficacy of servile works."<sup>34</sup>

Of course, God is not pleased when we rely solely upon our own efforts, even if we were to fast on bread and water and roll in thornbushes all day long. Thus, Luther failed to be rid of sin, as the same article explains:

Such an attitude of mind was necessarily followed by hopeless discouragement and sullen despondency, creating a condition of soul in which Luther actually "hated God and was angry at him", blasphemed God, and deplored that he was ever born. This abnormal condition produced a brooding melancholy, physical, mental, and spiritual depression...<sup>35</sup>

Luther *thought* he had tried to follow the Church’s ages-old recommendation of doing good works to overcome sin. He had done the external actions, but inside of him, there lacked the humble hope, reliance, and trust so necessary to give our good works value and power.

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<sup>33</sup> **averted:** turned away from, avoided

<sup>34</sup> The 1917 Catholic Encyclopedia, article of Martin Luther, <https://www.NewAdvent.org>

<sup>35</sup> The 1917 Catholic Encyclopedia, article of Martin Luther, <https://www.NewAdvent.org>

### ***Luther jumps to the other extreme***

Luther, wondering what was wrong, finally came to a ‘brilliant’ conclusion! The Catholic Church must have been wrong for 1,500 years in Her teaching about how man is saved! The encyclopedia article goes on:

...later, by a strange process of reasoning, Luther ascribed<sup>36</sup> [all his above-mentioned problems of melancholy and depression] **to the teaching of the Church concerning good works**, while all the time he was living in direct and absolute opposition to its doctrinal teaching and disciplinary code.”<sup>37</sup>

Luther “had tried the Church’s way” (so he thought) of doing good works. It did not work. From now on, it was going to be *his* way. Whereas the first trap Luther fell into caused him to torture himself by placing undue trust in his own strength and works (a Pelagian<sup>38</sup> error; for “without God we can do nothing”), he now flip-flopped completely. He now convinced himself that salvation and holiness does not depend upon us and our works *at all*; for him, salvation depended upon one thing, and one thing only: what he called “faith”. So insistent was Luther on his rejection of works as necessary for salvation, that he, or his deluded followers, coined the infamous expression “sola fides,” which means “faith alone.” Not only is this *not* true (the truth is that man is saved by faith and works), but also, what Luther meant by “faith” is certainly not what the Catholic Church means by that word. Let us examine that now.

### ***What most Protestants mean by “faith”***

The Catholic Church teaches that along with the grace of sanctifying grace, God bestows the three great theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity into the soul. The Baltimore Catechism #3 teaches clearly what each of these is:

- Question 465. **What is Faith?** *Faith is a theological virtue by which we firmly believe the truths which God has revealed.*
- Question 466. **What is Hope?** *Hope is a theological virtue by which we firmly trust that God will give us eternal life and the means to obtain it.*
- Question 467. **What is Charity?** *Charity is a theological virtue by which we love God above all things for His own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.*

“Faith” for a Protestant is none of the above. For them, “faith” is the presumption<sup>39</sup> (baseless confidence) that they “are saved” from having “declared themselves believers in Jesus Christ.” For Protestants, “faith” consists in a man believing two things:

- Jesus is God and Savior
- A man is “saved” (that is, safe from eternal damnation) thanks to this belief, and thanks to this belief alone (NOT by works!)

If a person lacks either of the above, the Protestant would say that man does not have “faith.” That is, if the man has any **doubt** that by accepting Jesus as God and Savior that he is now guaranteed of heaven when he dies, then his act of “faith” was not real. If he does believe it, then he is guaranteed of free ride to heaven. **But this bizarre overconfidence which Protestants call “faith” is, in reality, nothing but sinful presumption for two reasons.**

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<sup>36</sup> **ascribed:** attributed, imputed, or referred

<sup>37</sup> The 1917 Catholic Encyclopedia, article of Martin Luther, <https://www.NewAdvent.org>

<sup>38</sup> **Pelagius** was a heretic who lived in St. Augustine’s time and who wrote very plausible-sounding, but heretical and dangerous works about grace. Pelagius imagined the process of salvation is something like this: a man, unaided by God’s grace, “makes the first move” towards salvation; God then comes into the picture after that. St. Augustine wrote beautiful tracts refuting Pelagius.

<sup>39</sup> **presumption:** an idea that is taken to be true, and often used as the basis for other ideas, although it is not known for certain

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versions were now in existence and heavily being used by the heretics to corrupt unknowing souls. Remember: we call these heretical books as “bibles” (with quotes), not bibles; for, besides the obvious issues of missing books, the 1917 Catholic Encyclopedia adds, “the renderings of some of the [Protestant] texts showed evident signs of controversial bias, and it became of the first importance for the English Catholics of the day to be furnished with a translation of their own, on the accuracy of which they could depend and to which they could appeal in the course of argument.”<sup>76</sup>

The same article goes on: “The work of preparing such a version was undertaken by the members of the English Catholic College at Douai, in Flanders (which is today part of France), founded by William Allen (afterwards a cardinal) in 1568. The chief share of the translating was borne by Dr. Gregory Martin, formerly of St. John's College, Oxford. His text was revised by Thomas Worthington, Richard Bristowe, John Reynolds, and Allen himself – all of them Oxford men. A series of notes was added, designed to answer the theological arguments of the [Protestant revolutionaries]; these were prepared by Allen, assisted by Bristowe and Worthington.” Although the work began in 1578 in Douai, political problems forced the work to be moved to another city in France – Rheims. There, the New Testament was completed. The entire new English translation of the Bible was published in 1609-1610, coming to be known as the Douay-Rheims Bible.

These men translated directly, not from the original Hebrew or Greek, but from the Latin Vulgate of St. Jerome, which had been declared authoritative by the Council of Trent. **It was common knowledge that the Latin Vulgate text was purer than any manuscripts at that time extant in the original languages.**

In a final effort to keep England Catholic, the Douay Rheims was soon secretly disseminated throughout England as an orthodox Catholic Bible.

**In the remainder of this lesson, we will examine other English “translations” which have come out after the Douay Rheims Bible.**

## English Protestant “Bibles” Made after the Douay Rheims Bible

### **“English Revised Version” (1881-1895)**

In England, although many Protestants lavished praise on the King James version, the more learned knew that this version was full of problems. Revisions of the King James were eventually undertaken, and one of these was perhaps the best known – the “English Revised Version”.<sup>77</sup> This version, was of course, not a Catholic version.

### **“American Standard Version” (1881)**

The American Standard Version was a minor American revision of the English Revised Version of 1881. Several modern-day American “bibles” are based upon this, including the Revised Standard Version and the New American Standard Bible.<sup>78</sup>

Are you confused yet? Lost? Just remember: James, the English king ordered a thoroughly Protestant version of scriptures to be created called the “King James Version” (also called the “Authorized Version”). Besides its obvious Anglican bias, this version was so full of (unintentional?) inaccuracies that it was eventually reworked into the “English Revised Version.” This revised version made its way across the Atlantic into America, and, with a slight re-editing, appeared as the “American Standard Version.” So, it is easy to see that these “bibles” are basically just the King James

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<sup>76</sup> <https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05140a.htm> The “Douay Bible” entry in the encyclopedia

<sup>77</sup> <http://www.bible-researcher.com/erv.html> “English Revised Version (1881-1895)”

<sup>78</sup> <http://www.bible-researcher.com/asv.html> “American Standard Version (1901)”



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