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## Church History

# **Augustine on the Bible**

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Augustine, like other Church Fathers, believed without hesitation that God is the author of the Bible. He accepted both its inspiration and its inerrancy. He used terms such as “inspire” and “dictate” to stress that the writing of Scripture was God’s initiative. God alone determined what was to be written in the pages of Holy Scripture.

Augustine also consistently used the ablative case when referring to the work of the Holy Spirit in writing Scripture. In grammar, this case uses the prepositions, “from” or “with” or “by,” and then when referring to the role of the human authors he used the preposition “through.” By using this grammar, he made the same point: Scripture is wholly God’s Word—“from” God, “through” human authors.

## **Honouring the canon**

Where he encountered individual difficulties, he either did not make a judgment or he looked for an explanation that would preserve biblical infallibility. Thus, he stated, "Only to those books which are called canonical have I learned to give honour so that I believe most firmly that no author in these books made any error in writing."

Again, Augustine emphasized that a distinction has been made between the books written after the apostles and the authentic canon of the Old and New Testament. Sacred Scripture ... is placed high on a throne where it receives the submission of all pious and faithful intelligence.

## **A common persuasion**

For Augustine, as for the rest of the early Christian authors, biblical inerrancy was commonly accepted. For Augustine, as one author said, "the whole Bible was free of

contradictions, mistakes and errors." Within two years of his conversion, in 388, Augustine could write that one must "be aware that everything in the Old as well as the New Testament has been written and entrusted by one Holy Spirit."

Augustine's view of Scripture had a huge impact on western Christianity; "we are all Augustinians" in one way or another. Would that all who profess faith in Christ would also follow him in this

conviction that Scripture was to be “placed high on a throne” in the life of the Church!