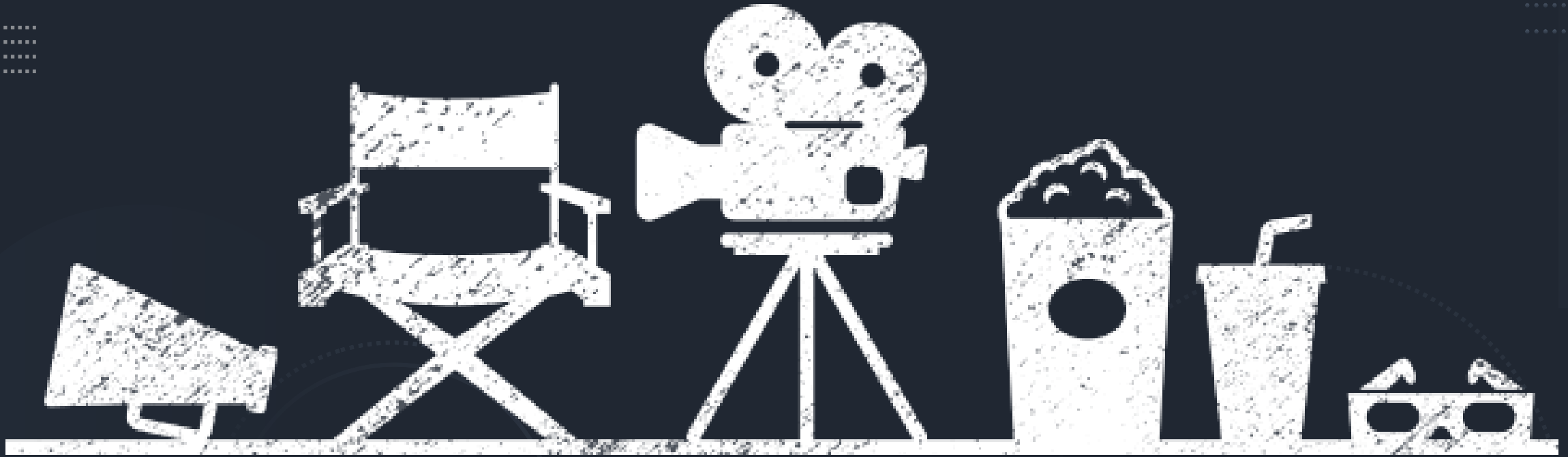


The History of Salvation 1



Suggested Reading

- The Bible
- Course Notes
- Scott Hahn, *A Father Who Keeps His Promises: God's Covenant Love in Scripture*, 1998.
- John Bergsma, *Bible Basics for Catholics: A New Picture of Salvation History*, 2012.
- John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio*, 1998, nn. 10-11, 16, 94.
- John Paul II, *Letter on Pilgrimage to Places Linked to the History of Salvation*, 29.6.1999.




Suggested Viewing

- *Prince of Egypt*, 1998
- *Abraham*, 1993.
- *The Chosen*.

Suggested Listening

- Podcast: Fr Mike Schmitz, *Bible In A Year*.



A Key to
Understanding
the Scriptures



How Some People See the Bible

Old Testament God



New Testament Jesus



What is the History
of Salvation?

When does it
begin?



Creation of the Sun, Moon & Planets, Michelangelo, 1511.



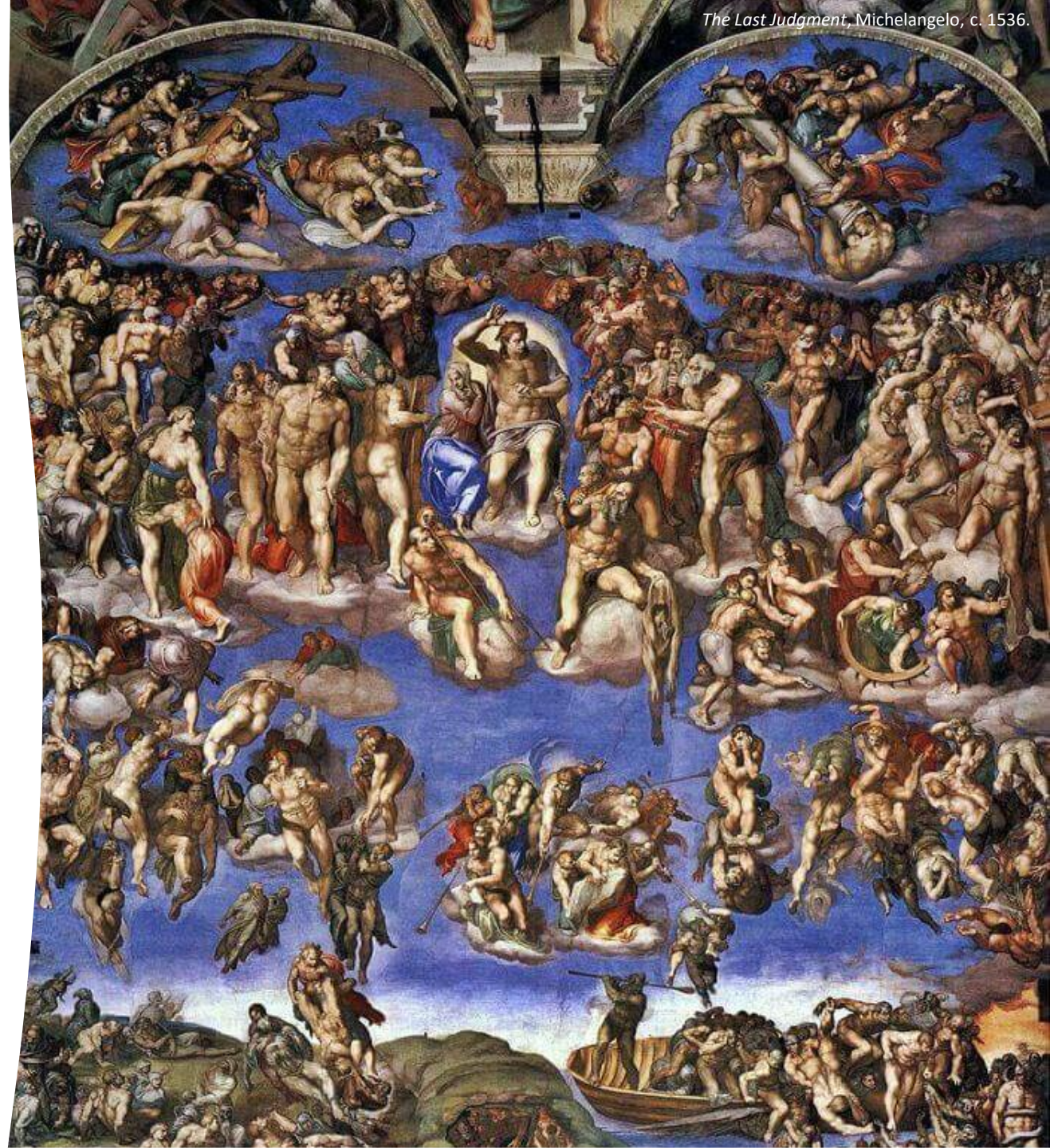
Space & Time

Time is Linear

Creation
(Adam)

Parousia
(The New
Adam)

God reveals Himself progressively, in words and deeds, as part of his saving plan.



The Last Judgment, Michelangelo, c. 1536.



The Annunciation, Fra Angelico, 1430.

The 'Fullness of
Time':
The Incarnation

Covenant is Key

What is a covenant?

Covenant comes from the Latin word, *convenire* (to come together or agree).

The difference between covenant & contract in the Bible is profound. There are two big differences between our notion of contract and the biblical notion of covenant:

- Contracts involve promises, covenants involve oaths.
- Contracts exchange property or services, covenants exchange persons.

‘Covenant’ explains why God does and says the things He says and does in Scripture.



Covenants in the Ancient World

Structure:

- A Preamble
- Historical review of the relationship between the parties
- Obligations of the parties
- Blessings and curses for upholding or breaking the covenant
- Solemn ratification ceremony where the covenant is read/recited & eating & drinking



Covenants in the Bible

- God's covenants *forge sacred bonds*, raising creatures to the status of divine children, changing us into a family of God.
- History proceeds by means of a series of covenants made by God with His chosen people, culminating in the New Covenant. The Bible begins with God's covenant with Adam & Eve; the New Covenant embraces the entire world.
- Laws, commandments, rituals, God's oaths to His people & His people to Him, the story of sin, repentance & forgiveness, punishments & deliverance, prophecies of a new & final covenant *make sense in light of God's plan* to make us into his children through the covenants.



Covenants in the Bible

- The 4th Eucharistic Prayer reflects this understanding of salvation history:

You formed man in your own image & entrusted the whole world to his care ... when through disobedience he had lost your friendship, you did not abandon him to the power of death ... Time & again you offered them covenants & ... In the fullness of time you sent your Only Begotten Son to be our Saviour.

- The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* calls God, "the God of the Covenant" (401), describing Him as the God who "comes to meet man by His covenants" (309).
- Each of us is "called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer Him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead" (CCC, 357). That personal covenant is offered to us in the sacraments.
- The Eucharist: renewal of the covenant between the Lord & humankind. (*Sacrosanctam Concilians*, 10.)

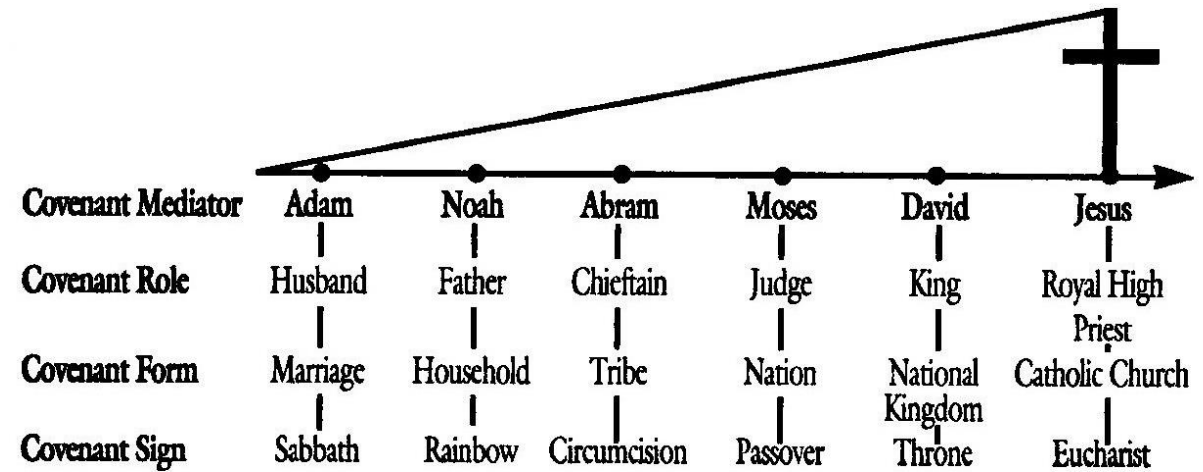


Biblical Covenants: God Unfolds His Plan

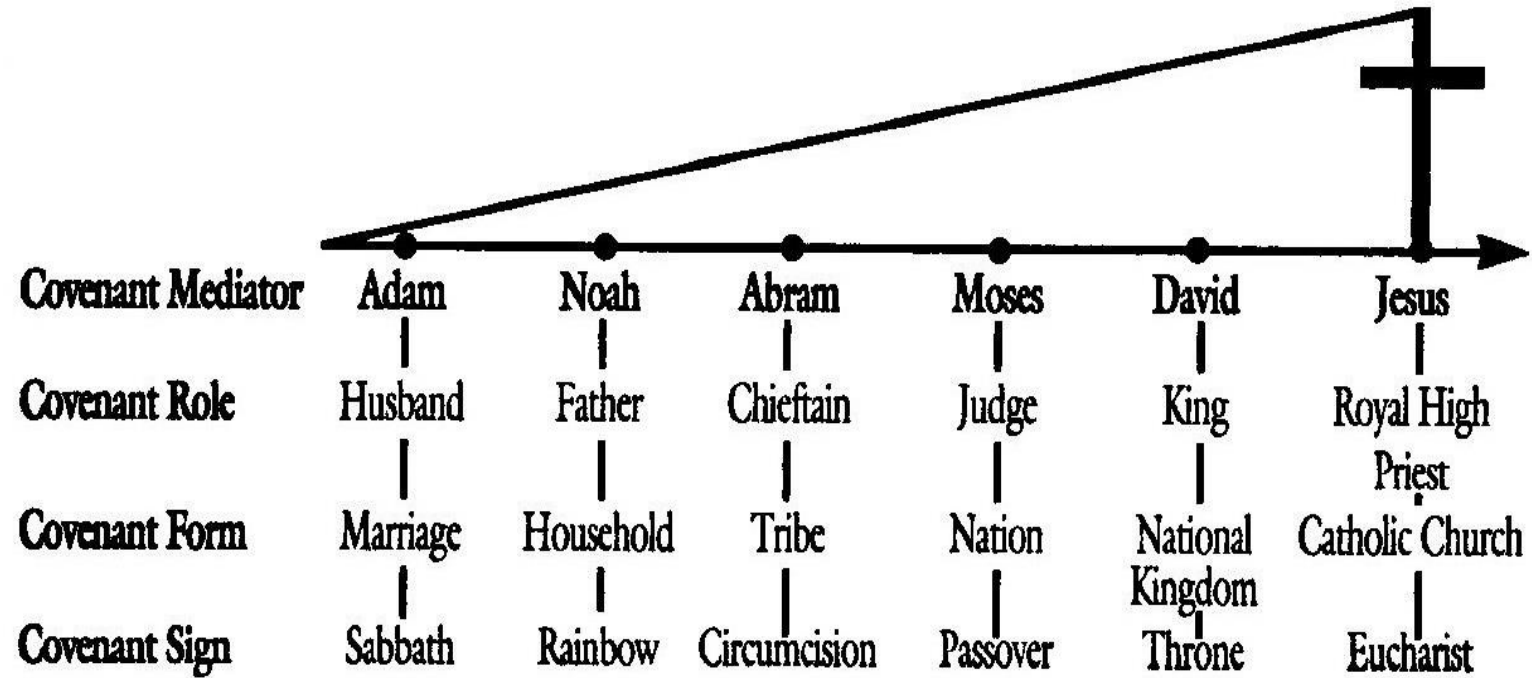
Promises & requirements:

5 special features

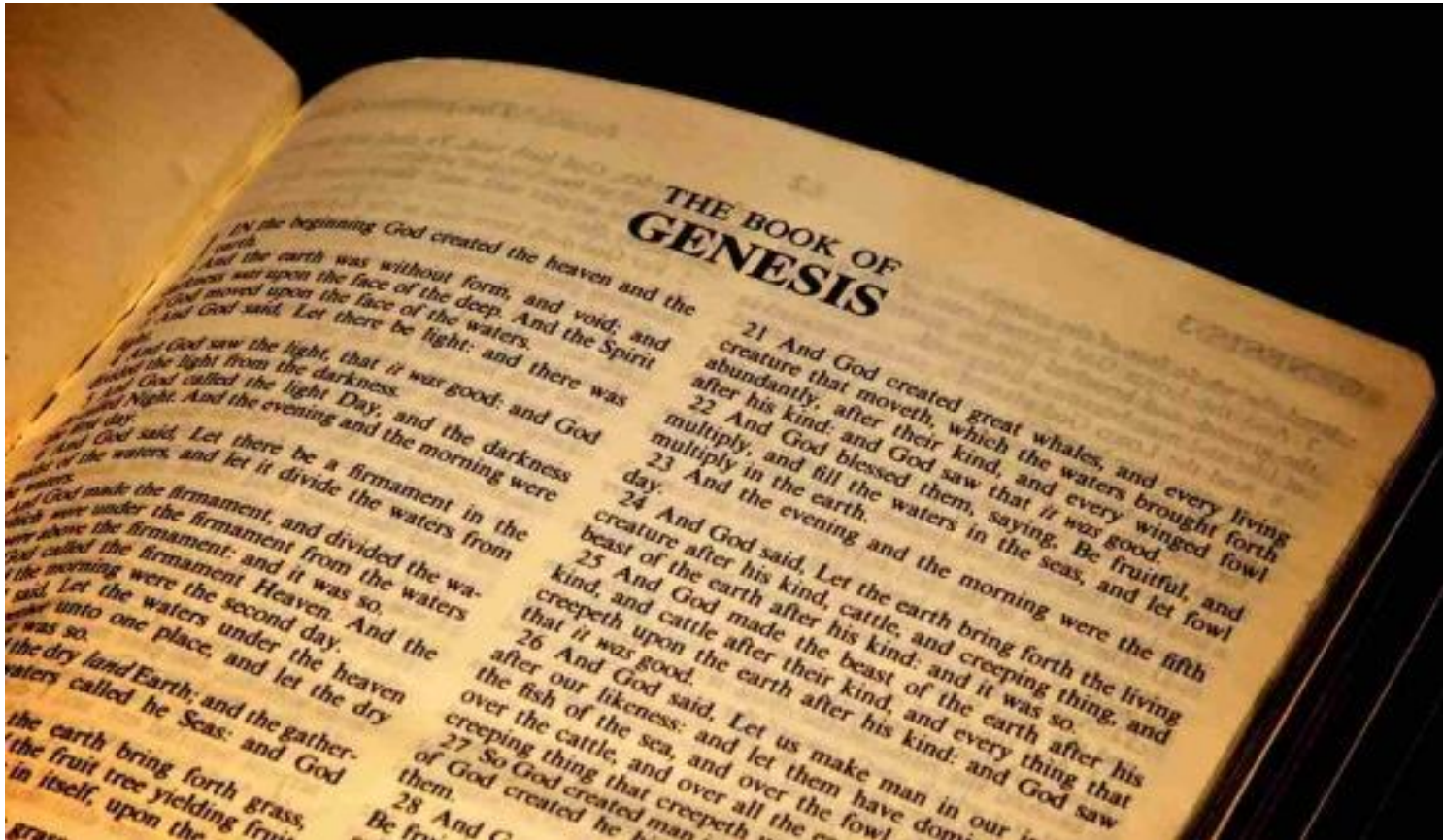
1. *Covenant Mediator* (person God makes the covenant with)
2. *Covenant Role* (who the mediator represents)
3. *Promises & Conditions* of the covenant (blessings & curses)
4. *Sign* by which the covenant will be celebrated & remembered
5. *Form* God's family has as a result of the covenant



God Gradually Reveals His Plan of Loving Goodness: The Stages of Revelation



- **CREATION:** God provides evidence of himself in creation.
- God spoke to Adam and Eve
- After the Fall, God promised them salvation (cf. *Gen 3:15*) and offered them his covenant.
- **NOAH:** God made an everlasting covenant with Noah & with all living beings (cf. *Gen 9:16*). It remains in force as long as the world lasts.
- **ABRAHAM:** God chose Abraham and made a covenant with him and his descendants.
- **MOSES:** By the covenant God formed his people and revealed his law to them through Moses. Through the prophets, he prepared them to accept the salvation destined for all humanity.
- **JESUS CHRIST:** God revealed himself fully by sending his own Son, in whom he has established his covenant for ever. The Son is his Father's definitive Word; so there will be no further Revelation after him.



How to Read *Genesis*

The Scriptures tell us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go.

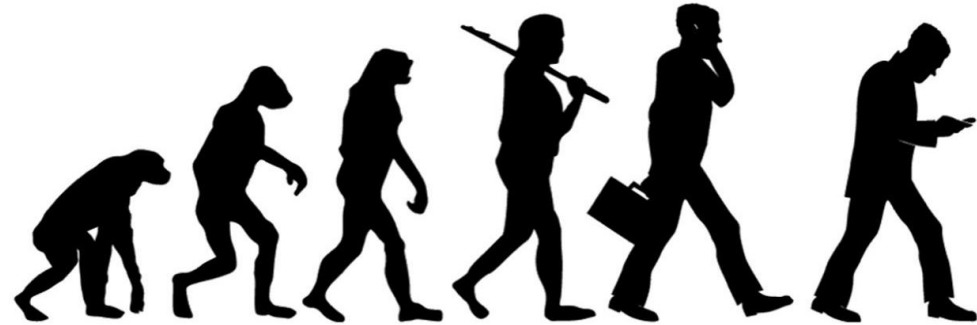
- Not a science textbook. That's not what Genesis was written for.
- Genesis is an ancient Hebrew narrative that tells history in a religious, way, not a modern secular narrative. It's history from God's perspective.
- Everything the Bible tells us is true. Scripture gives us religious history and truth, and it conveys it to us using symbols & figures & different literary styles.

Evolution?

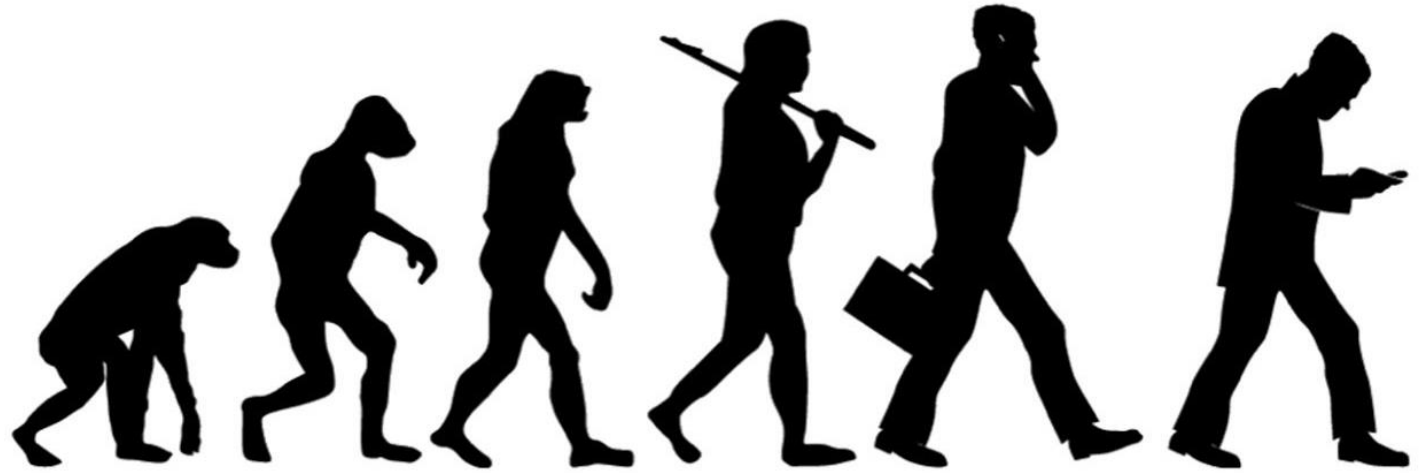
Genesis uses figurative language but is not 'myth'.

Tells us about Creation:

- Origin & end in God
- Order & goodness
- Vocation of man
- Drama of sin & hope of salvation.



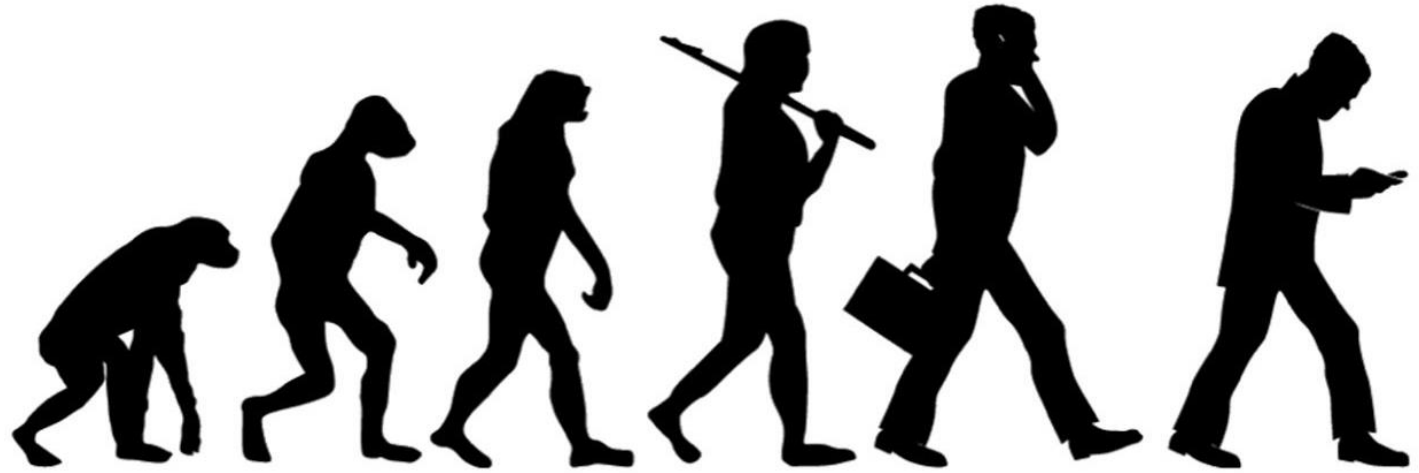
Creation
Spiritual Soul Infused by God
First Man & Woman
Human Dignity
Marriage
Original Sin & Consequences



‘There is no conflict between evolution & the doctrine regarding man & his vocation, provided we do not lose sight of certain fixed points. It is by virtue of his eternal soul that the whole person, including his body, possesses such great dignity. If the origin of the human body comes through living matter which existed previously, the spiritual soul is created directly by God.’

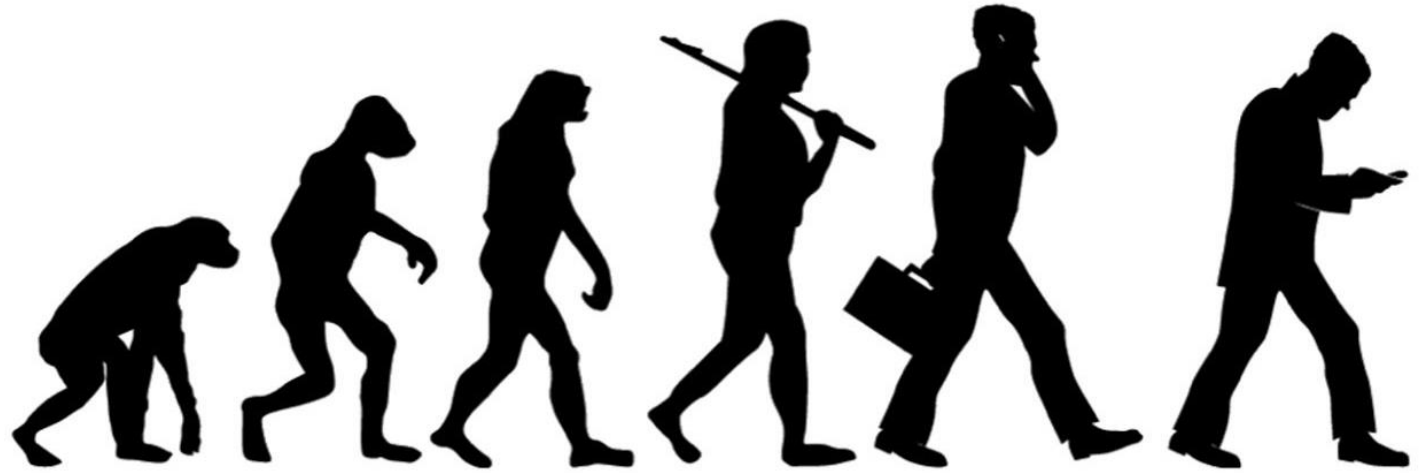
(Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, 1950).

Creation
Spiritual Soul Infused by God
First Man & Woman
Human Dignity
Marriage
Original Sin & Consequences



‘Theories of evolution which, because of the philosophies which inspire them, regard the spirit either as emerging from the forces of living matter, or as a simple epiphenomenon of that matter, are incompatible with the truth about man. They are therefore unable to serve as the basis for the dignity of the human person’.
(John Paul II, *Message to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences*, 22 October, 1996).

Creation
Spiritual Soul Infused by God
First Man & Woman
Human Dignity
Marriage
Original Sin & Consequences



‘It is not only a question of knowing when and how the universe arose physically, or when man appeared, but rather of discovering the meaning of such an origin: is the universe governed by chance, blind fate, anonymous necessity, or by a transcendent, intelligent and good Being called “God?”’

CCC, 284.



**Genesis 1-3:
The Love Story
of God &
Humanity**

'Creation exists to be a place for the covenant that God wants to make with man. The goal of creation is the covenant, the love story of God & man.'

(Benedict XVI, The Spirit of the Liturgy).



Genesis 1-3: The Love Story of God & Humanity

Creation: a deliberate, purposeful act of love by God. God made the world as a pure gift of His love.

The Sabbath: 7th day. The completion of God's work. The day He makes a covenant with the people He created, making Adam & Eve part of His family.

‘The revelation of creation is inseparable from the revelation & forging of the covenant of the one God with his People. Creation is revealed as the first step towards this covenant.’ (CCC, 288)

The covenant of creation: 1st sign of God's intentions for the world & human race. Witness to God's love.

Old Testament covenants: renew the creation covenant. Are a remembrance & renewal of this 1st covenant with creation. God remembers, rededicates & recommits Himself to this original covenant.

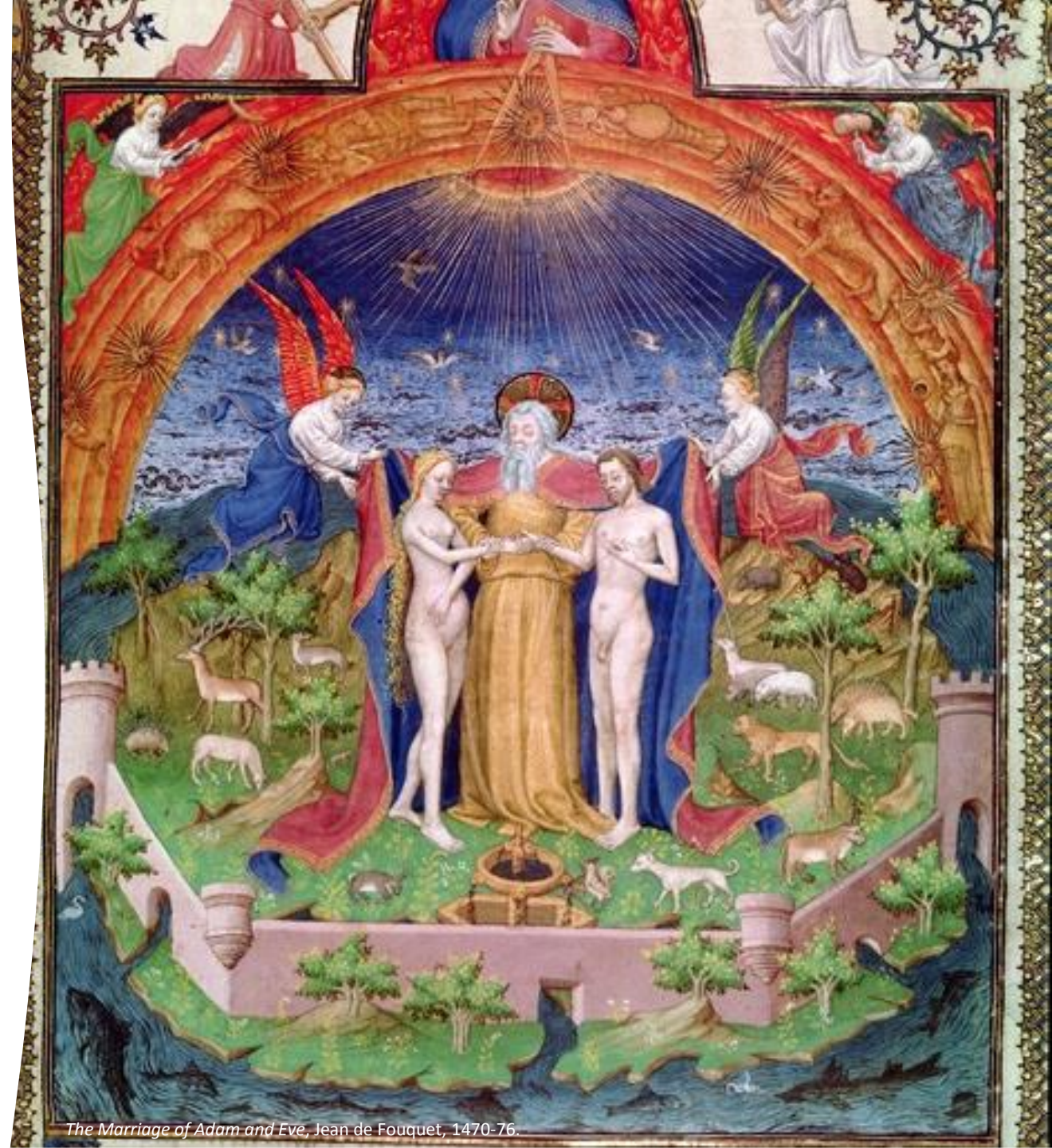
The New Covenant: final & everlasting covenant, brings about a new creation. Jesus, "firstborn of all creation" becomes the "first-fruits" of a reborn humanity (Col 1:15-20; 1 Cor 15:20). We enter into the New Covenant through Baptism & become "new creations" (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15).

The Covenant with Adam (Genesis 1:26-2:3)

God's covenant love is revealed in the very creation of the world (CCC, 288). Creation is the setting for the covenants.

The word "covenant" isn't used, but the story of Adam & Eve is told in covenant language.

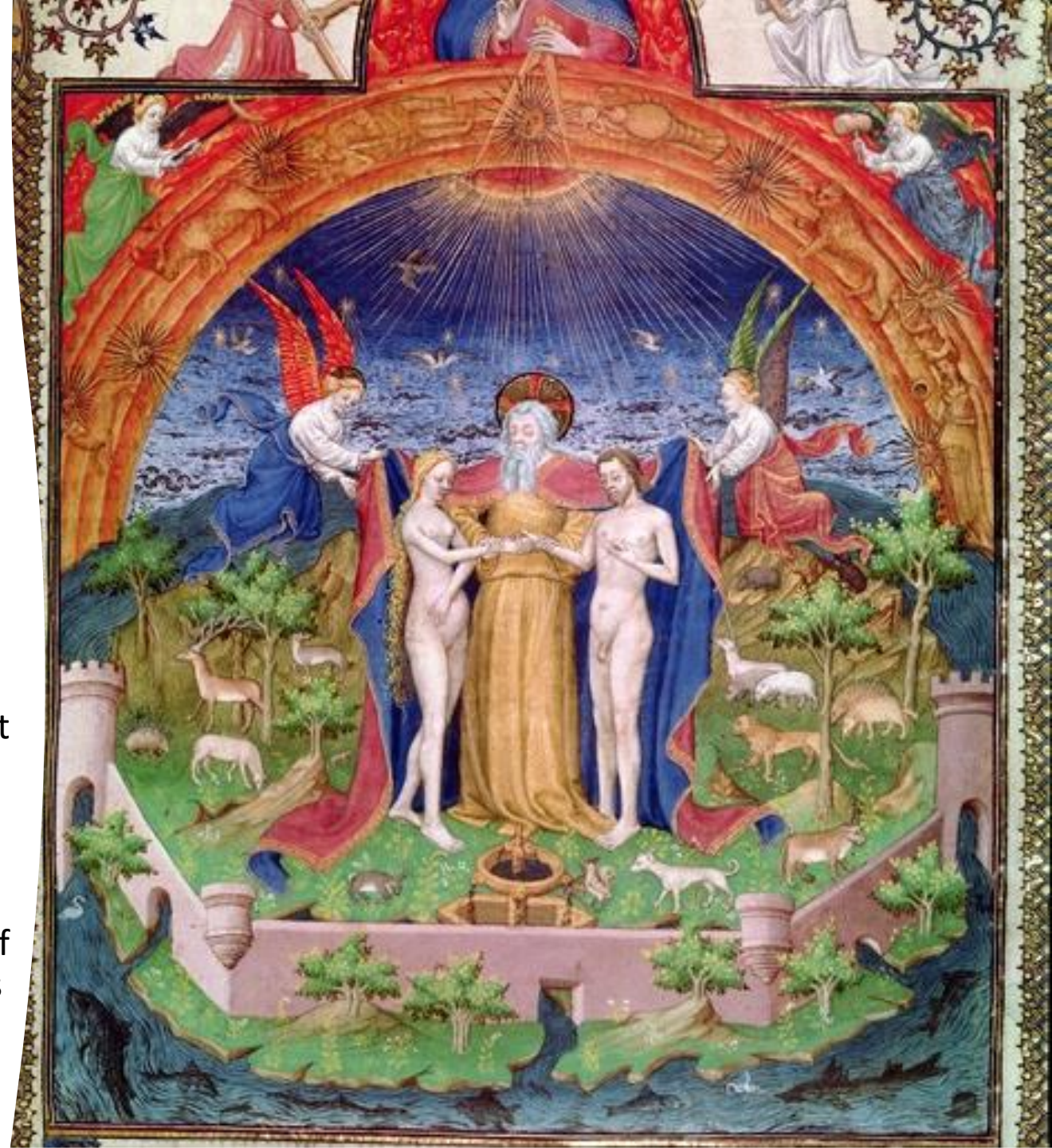
1. Adam: covenant mediator
2. Role: husband.
3. Promised blessings: their union will be fruitful; their offspring will fill the earth & rule over it.
4. God's condition: they must not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil. Penalty: they will die.
5. Sign by which the covenant will be remembered & celebrated: the Sabbath, the seventh day of rest.
6. By this covenant God's family assumes the form of the marriage bond between husband & wife.



The Marriage of Adam and Eve, Jean de Fouquet, 1470-76.

The Wedding in the Garden

- God institutes marriage: man & woman become one flesh (Gn 2:23-24)
- Read in light of the New Testament.
 - Marriage is not only the relationship between husband & wife. It is also a sign of the relationship God desires with all humanity.
 - Jesus says this text reflects God's will 'from the beginning of creation' & that 'what God has joined together no human being must separate' (Mk 10:2-16).
 - St Paul quotes this text & explains that the marriage covenant is a reference to the covenant between 'Christ & the Church' (Eph 5:21-33). Marriage is a symbol of the love Christ has for His bride, the Church, the love that God has for His people.
 - *Revelations* 'reveals' the marriage of Christ to His bride & new creation: new heaven & new earth. The image of the groom & spouse is one of the images the Bible uses to describe the relationship of God with His people.



God as Father

Two, complementary accounts of Creation in *Genesis*.

- *Genesis 1*: God the Creator brings the cosmos into existence & creates the human person 'in his image'.
- *Genesis 2*: God works personally, as a Father, lovingly fashioning the man from the dust, creating a garden, & a spouse for him.

God is Creator & also a Father, who loves His people tenderly, as a divine parent. To be born in someone's 'image & likeness' means to be that person's child. Here it expresses the Father-son relationship of God & His people. God intended people to be His children.

Words can't describe the love God has for us, so we are given the two most powerful images of human love imaginable, that of parent & child, & that of husband & wife (CCC, 219).



Michelangelo, *Creation of Eve*, 1511.

Creation of Eve, Michelangelo, c. 1512.

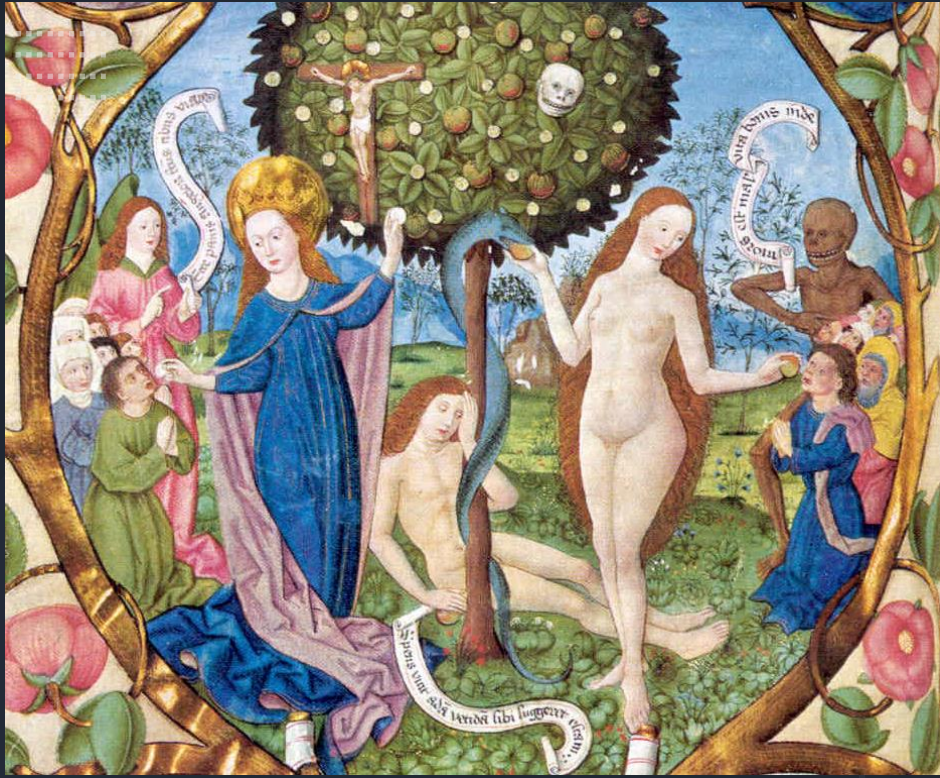
Genesis 3: The Fall

From sons & daughters living in Paradise to children who reject their Father's wisdom, squander their birthright, & lose their home.

- The Devil, in the form of the serpent, tempts them & leads them astray.
- Sin, the rejection of God's Fatherhood, enters human history.
- The consequences of this rejection are seen in the doctrine of Original Sin.
- Even as His children have exiled themselves from paradise through sin, God promises them redemption, a homecoming. He promises that throughout human history there will be an "enmity" between the serpent, Satan, & the woman, "the mother of all the living," & between their offspring (Gen 3:15, 20).
- But the History of Salvation is not just about saving us after the Fall. It began with God's loving plan at Creation.



The Temptation and Fall of Adam and Eve, Michelangelo, c. 1512.



The Protogospel

‘Christian tradition sees in this passage an announcement of the "New Adam" who, because he ‘became obedient unto death, even death on a cross’, makes amends ... for the disobedience, of Adam. Furthermore many Fathers & Doctors of the Church have seen the woman announced in the *Protoevangelium* as Mary ... the ‘new Eve.’ (CCC, 411)

The Lord God said to the Serpent

*“I will put enmity between you & the woman,
& between your seed & her seed;
he shall bruise your head, & you shall bruise
his heel.” (Gen 3: 14-15)*





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Asia Minor

Armenia

Syria

Mesopotamia

Assyria

Media

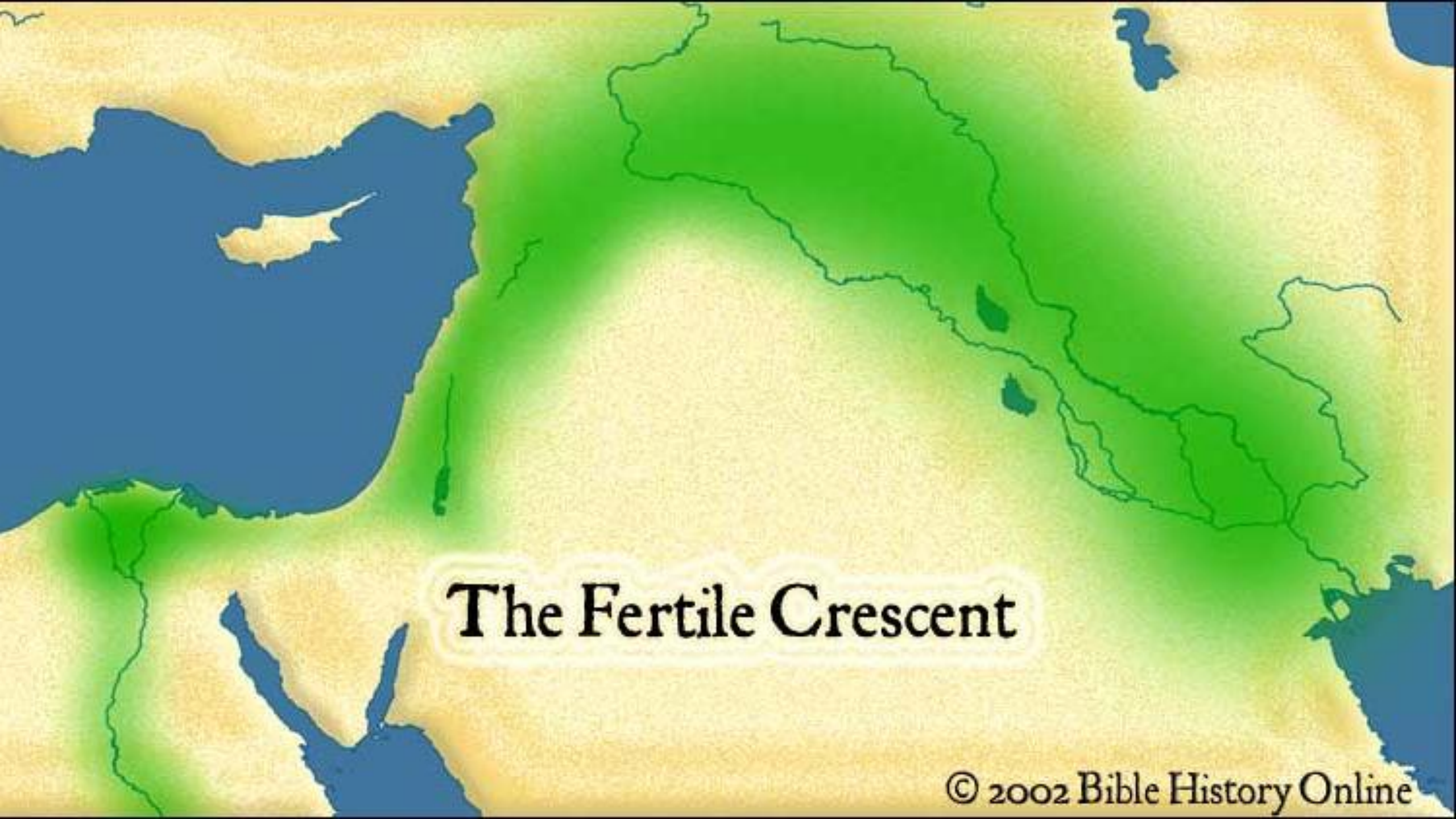
Egypt

Arabian Desert

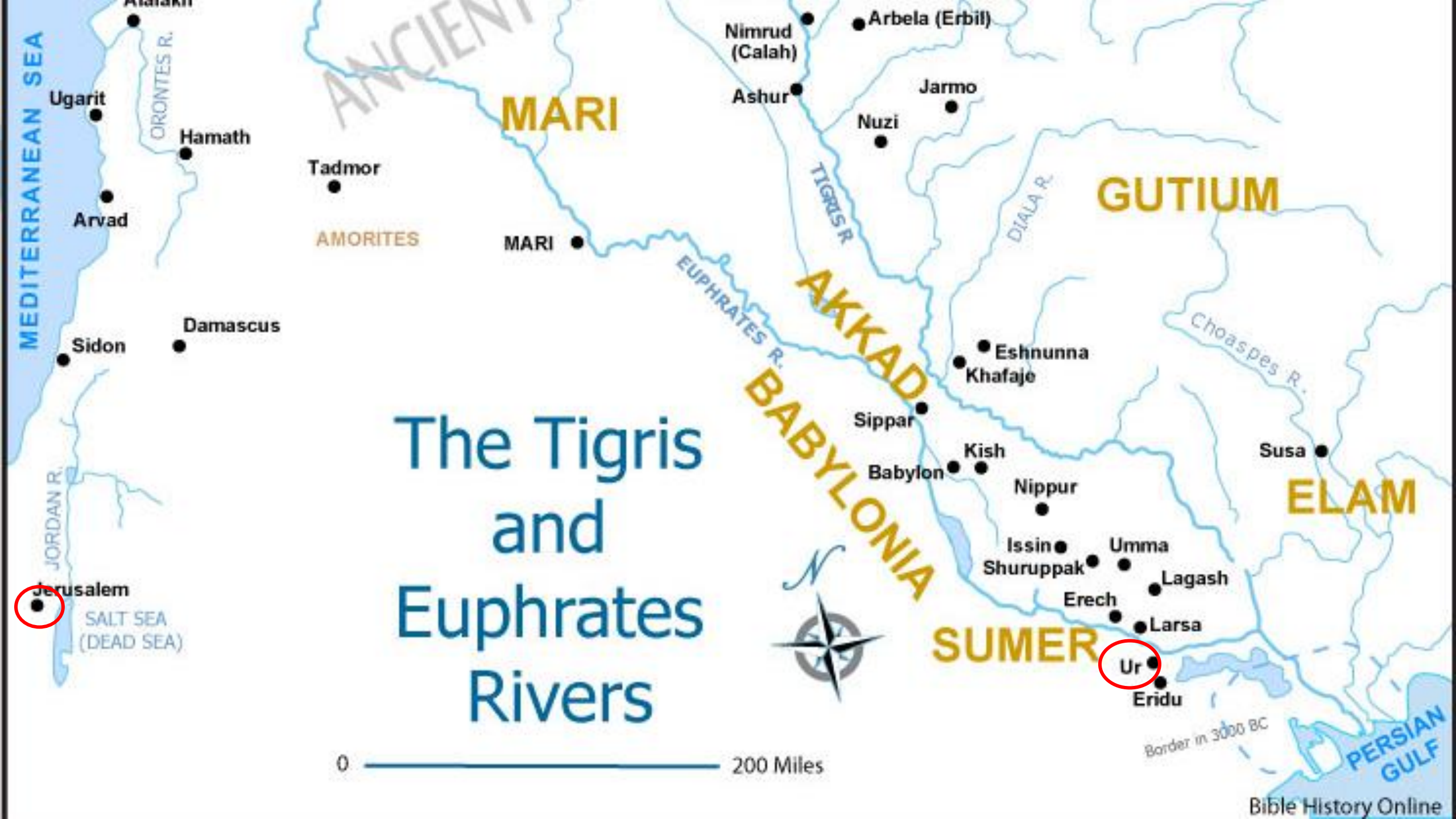
Elam

Persia

The Old Testament World

A map of the Middle East region, with the Fertile Crescent highlighted in a vibrant green color. The rest of the landmass is shown in a light tan or beige color. The Mediterranean Sea is visible on the left, and the Red Sea is on the bottom left. The Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea are on the right. The text "The Fertile Crescent" is overlaid on the map in a white, serif font with a drop shadow.

The Fertile Crescent



Timeline



<https://www.chronoflotimeline.com/timeline/shared/4392/Ancient-History-Timeline/>

- Abraham: c. 2,000 BC
- King David: c. 1,000 BC
- Nebuchadnezzar c. 650 BC
- <https://kottke.org/18/02/a-timeline-map-of-the-200000-year-history-of-human-civilization>

BC/BCE & AD/CE: does it matter?

Revelation Begins with Creation

Revelation starts with creation. (CCC, 288).

Through creatures God manifests himself to people of all times, making his goodness & perfections known. Among all creatures the human being, the image & likeness of God, is the creature that most fully reveals Him.

By natural reason man can know God with certainty, on the basis of his works.

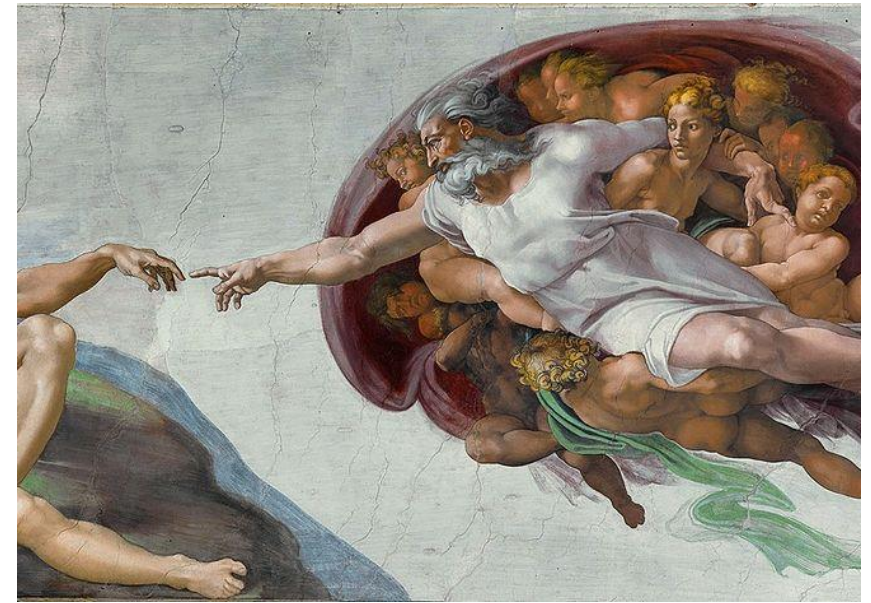
But there is another order of knowledge, which man cannot possibly arrive at by his own powers: the order of divine Revelation. Through an utterly free decision, God has revealed himself & given himself to man. (CCC, 50)



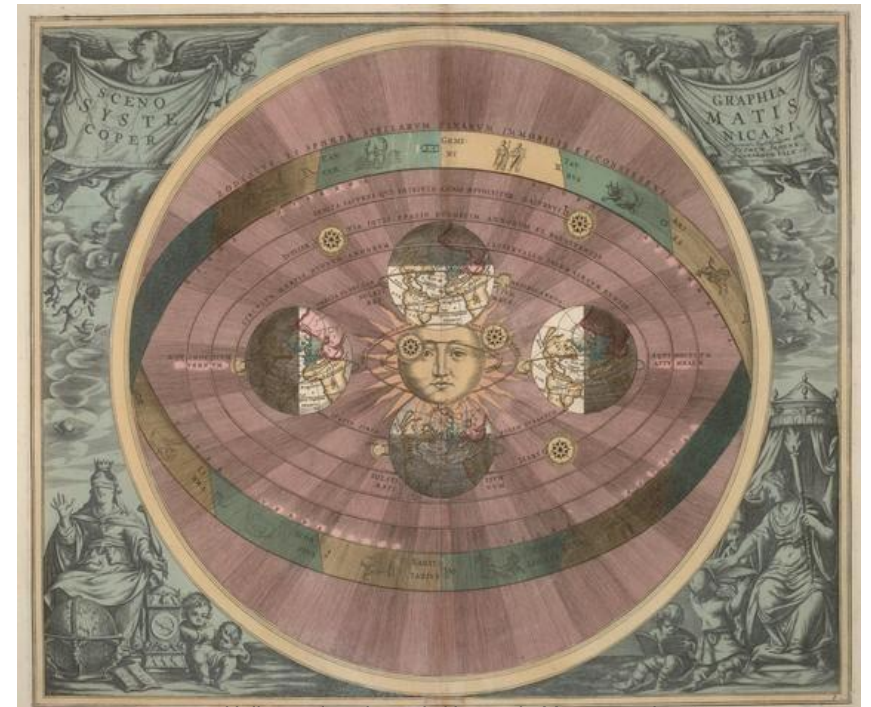
What does God reveal?

God reveals Himself & His plan of salvation, preparing the world for the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, so that men should have access to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit, & thus become sharers in the divine nature. (CCC, 51)

The principal subject matter of divine Revelation is not abstract truths about the world & mankind, but rather God's self-revelation of the mystery of his own personal life & his invitation to share in it.



Creation of Adam, Michelangelo, 1511.



Andreas Cellarius, 'Heliocentric universe', *Harmonia Macrocosmica*, 1660. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Why does God reveal?

From the fullness of his love, God communicates his own divine life to the men he freely created, in order to adopt them as his sons in his only-begotten Son.

By revealing himself God wishes to make them capable of responding to him, and of knowing him and of loving him far beyond their own natural capacity. (CCC, 52).



The Miraculous Catch of Fish, Raphael, 1515.



Abraham and Sarah, Orthodox Icon.

How Does God Reveal?

God reveals Himself:

- progressively
- in time
- in deeds & words
- forming & guiding a people to receive Revelation

“The divine plan of Revelation is realized simultaneously "by deeds & words which are intrinsically bound up with each other" & shed light on each another.

Deeds: confirm the words

Words: proclaim the deeds & explain the mysteries

God prepares humankind & communicates himself to them *gradually*.

Revelation culminates in the person & mission of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.” (CCC, 53)

‘History of Salvation’ & the stages of Revelation (CCC, 54-65)



Revelation Culminates in Christ

The history of salvation points to Christ.

The prophets: proclaim the promised Messiah; announce the new covenant, spiritual & eternal, to be written on the hearts of believers. Christ will reveal it with the beatitudes & all his teachings.

Jesus Christ: simultaneously mediator & the fullness of Revelation. Both Revealer & the Revelation, as the Word of God made flesh. God, in his Word, has said everything & in a definitive way.

There will be no further Revelation

The New Covenant is definitive & will never pass away; & no new public revelation is to be expected.

Revelation is complete, but the History of Salvation continues. Parousia.

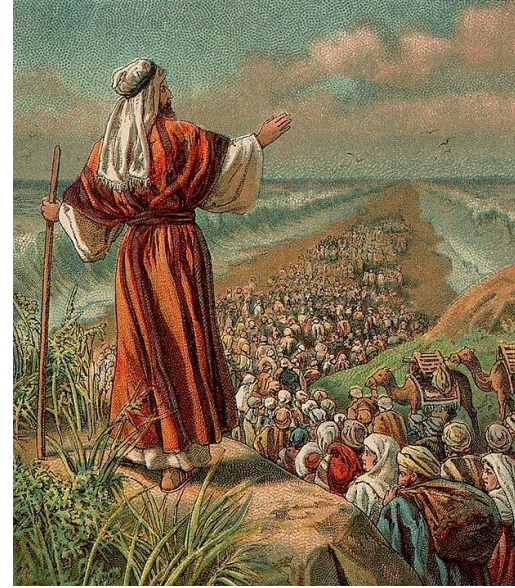
Growth in Understanding the Faith

Even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made completely explicit; it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries.

Words & Deeds

Divine Revelation is carried out by deeds & words which are intrinsically bound up with each other" & shed light on each other. (CCC, 53).

In addition to the works & external signs by which he reveals himself, God grants the interior impulse of his grace to enable us to adhere wholeheartedly to the truths revealed.



Exodus from Egypt, Providence Lithograph Company, 1907. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

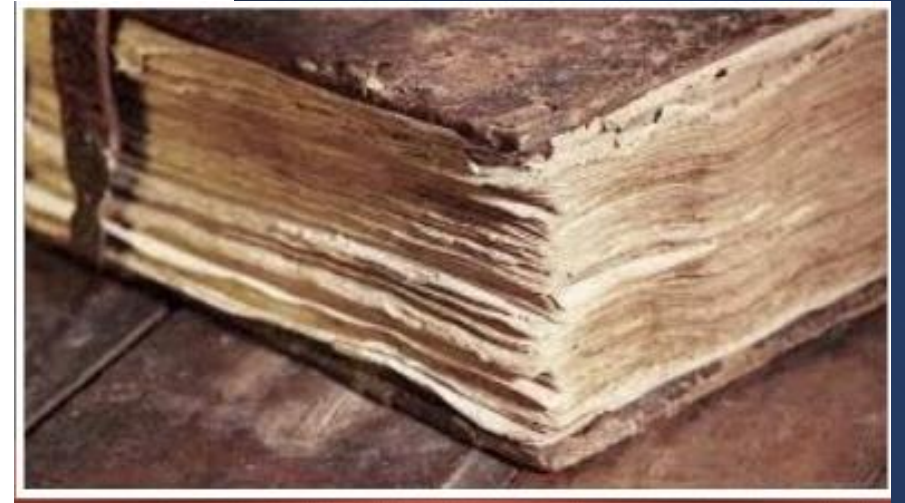


How can we interpret Sacred Scripture?

The Second Vatican Council gives 3 criteria for interpreting Scripture in accordance with the Spirit who inspired it:

1. Be attentive to the content and **unity** of the whole Scripture. Scripture is a unity by reason of the unity of God's plan.
2. Read the Scripture within "the living Tradition of the whole Church".
 - According to a saying of the Fathers, Sacred Scripture is written principally in the Church's heart rather than in documents and records, for 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.
 - Analogy of faith = the **coherence** of the truths of faith among themselves and within the whole plan of Revelation.

So: Don't take parts of the Scriptures in isolation or in ways that are not coherent with God's whole plan of Revelation, and look to the interpretations contained within the Tradition of the Church.



Interpreting Sacred Scripture

- In Sacred Scripture, God speaks to man in a human way.
- To interpret Scripture correctly, the reader must be attentive to what
 - the *human authors* truly wanted to affirm, and
 - *God* wanted to reveal to us by their words.
- **To discover the *human authors'* intention, the reader must take into account**
 - **Conditions of their time & culture,**
 - **Literary genres in use at that time, & the modes of feeling, speaking & narrating then current.**
 - **Truth is differently presented & expressed in various types of historical writing, in prophetic & poetical texts, & other forms of literary expression.**
- Genesis, for instance, is an ancient Hebrew narrative that tells history in a religious, way, not a modern secular narrative. It's history from God's perspective.
- Everything the Bible tells us is true. Scripture gives us religious history & truth, & it conveys it to us using symbols & figures & different literary styles.



Above, *Creation of Eve*, Below, *The Fall of Adam & Eve*, Michelangelo, 1508-12.



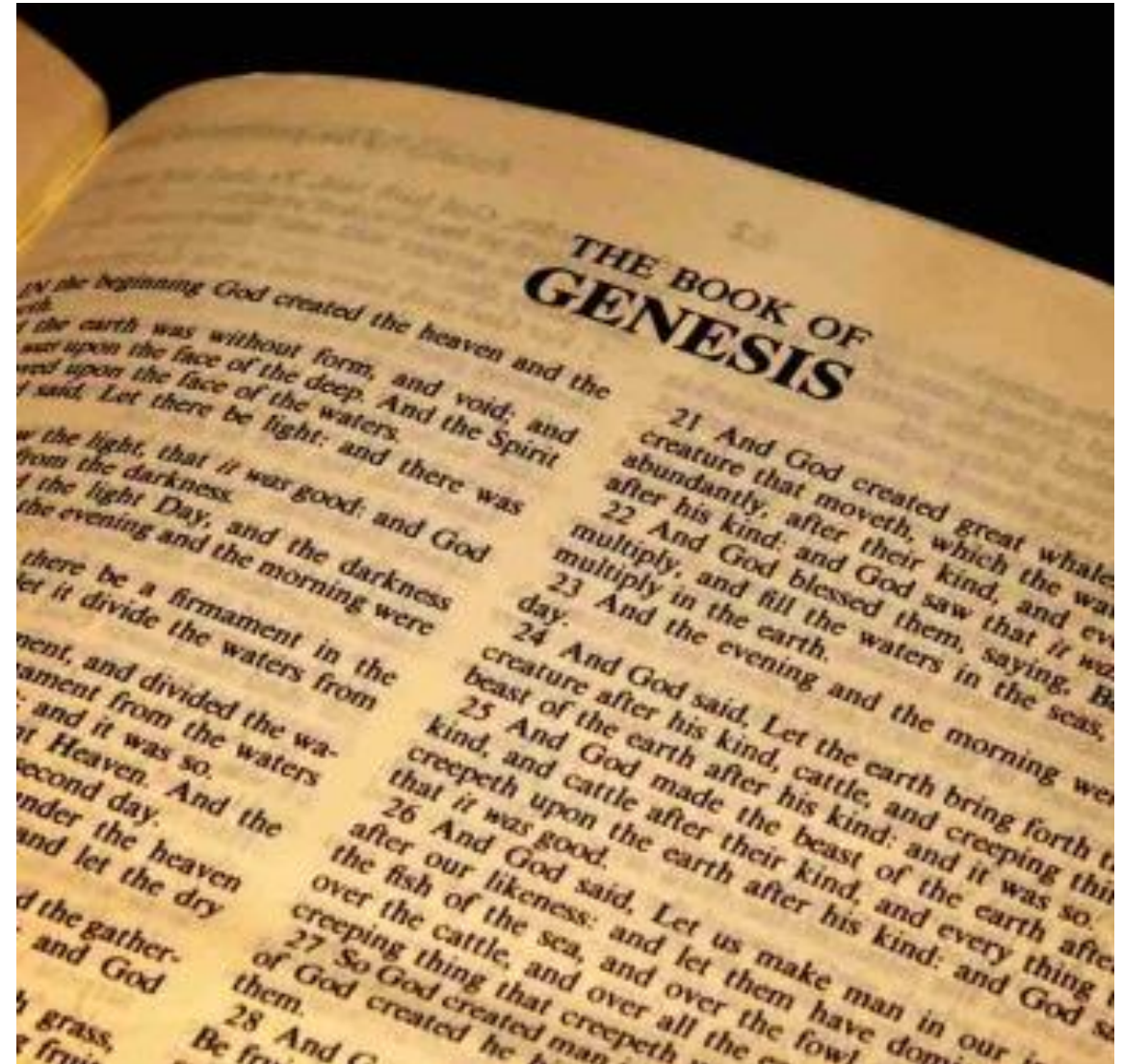
How to Read Sacred Scripture

To understand Sacred Scripture correctly, one needs to take into account:

- The 'senses' of Scripture
- Literary Genres
- The Church's Tradition

Accepting the different senses & literary genres found in Sacred Scripture is necessary for interpreting correctly what the sacred writers say about aspects of the world that pertain to the natural sciences. These include the formation of the cosmos, the appearance on earth of different life forms, the origins of human life & natural phenomena in general.

A "fundamentalist" interpretation of every passage in Scripture as a literal, historical event should be avoided, when other interpretations are possible. One should also avoid the error of interpreting the biblical narratives as purely mythological, lacking in historical content or any information about God's direct intervention in the events described.



Meanings in the Scriptures, or the “Senses” of Scripture

According to an ancient tradition, there are 4 senses of Scripture:

1. Literal
2. Allegorical
3. Moral
4. Anagogical



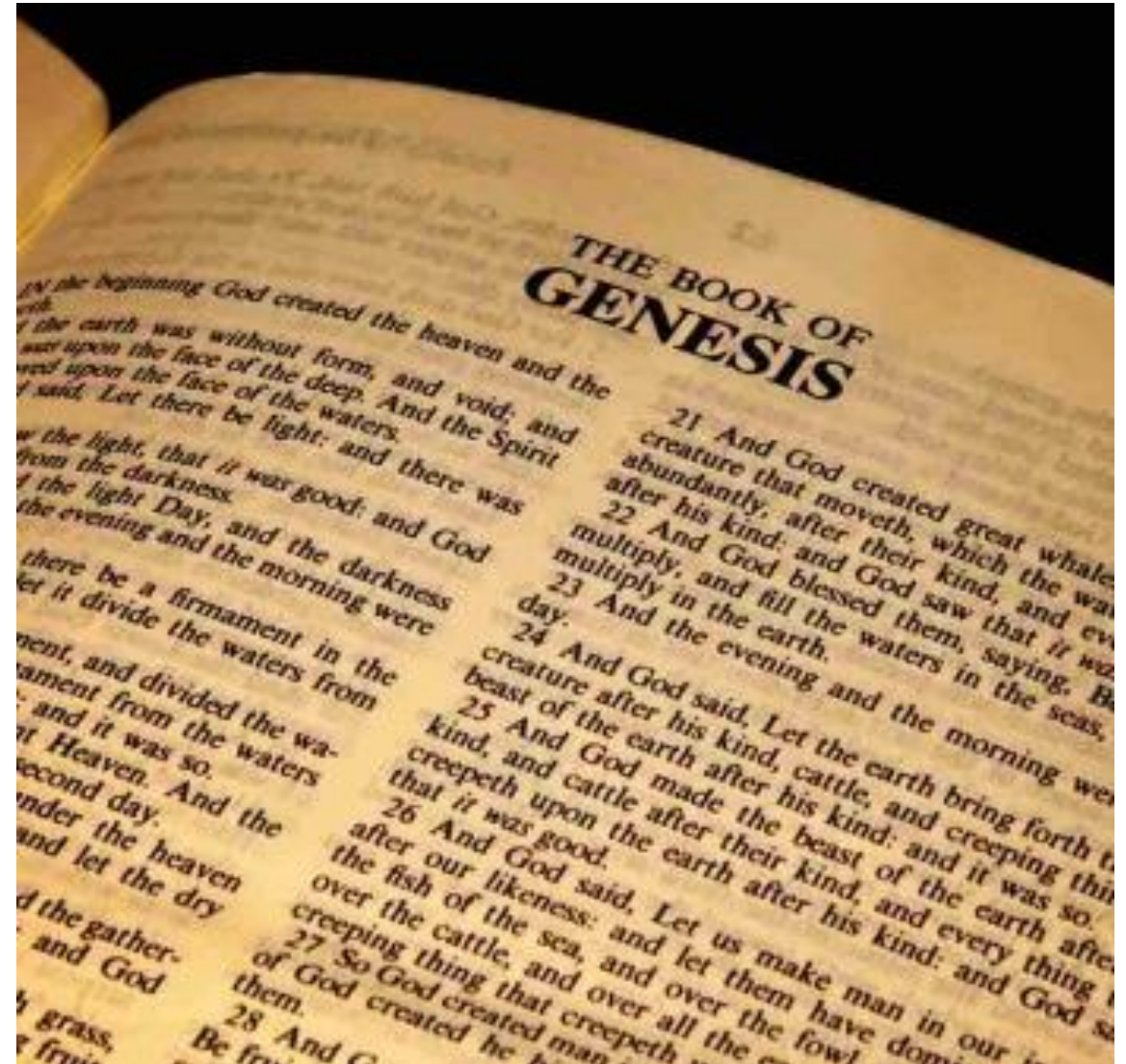
Spiritual Senses

The concordance of the four senses guarantees richness to the living reading of Scripture.

The Literal Sense of Scripture

The meaning conveyed by the words of Scripture, following the rules of sound interpretation. (The text)

All other senses of Sacred Scripture are based on the literal.



The Spiritual Senses of Scripture

The realities and *events* about which Scripture speaks can be *signs*.

The Allegorical Sense: understanding *events* more profoundly by recognizing their *significance* in Christ.

Eg. the crossing of the Red Sea is a *sign or type* of Christ's victory & of Christian Baptism; Noah's Ark & the Church as the boat in which Christ's people are saved; the Paschal lamb in Exodus as Christ the Lamb of God, the staff Moses raises in the desert & the Cross, Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac; Jonah's 3 days in the whale & Christ's 3 days in the tomb.



Unity of the Old & New Testaments: Typology

- Discerns in God's works of the Old Covenant *prefigurations* of what he accomplished in the fullness of time in the person of his incarnate Son.
- Unity of the Old and New Testaments: Christians read the Old Testament in the light of Christ crucified and risen. Such typological reading discloses the inexhaustible content of the Old Testament.
- As an old saying put it, the New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New. (CCC, 128-130)



The Dove Returns to Noah, James Tissot, 19th century.



Abraham & Isaac, Olivier, 1817.

Typology

“I will put enmity between you & the woman & between your seed & her seed; he shall bruise your head, & you shall bruise his heel.” (Gen 3: 14-15)

“The knot of Eve’s disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve had bound fast through unbelief, this did the Virgin Mary set free through faith.” (St Irenaeus, *Adversus Haeresis*, 3.22)

Christ the new Adam, Mary the new Eve

Eva & Ave



The Spiritual Senses of Scripture

The realities and *events* about which Scripture speaks can be *signs*.

Moral Sense

The *events* reported in Scripture lead us to act justly. They were written for our instruction.

Examples?



The Spiritual Senses of Scripture

The realities and *events* about which Scripture speaks can be *signs*. (Events)

Anagogical Sense: Realities and events seen in terms of their *eternal significance*, leading us toward our true homeland.

- Eg. the Church on earth is a sign of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Greek: Anagoge = "leading"

Exegesis

Applying these rules to work towards better understanding & explaining the meaning of Sacred Scripture in order to help the Church to form a firmer judgement.

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.

“I would not believe in the Gospel, had not the authority of the Catholic Church already moved me.” (St Augustine)



The Canon of Sacred Scripture

It was by the apostolic Tradition that the Church discerned which writings are to be included in the list of the sacred books.

The Old Testament : 46 books

- **Books of the Law** (*Pentateuch*)
Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
- **Historical Books**
Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel I&II, Kings I&II, Chronicles I&II, Ezra & Nehemiah, Tobit, Judith, Esther, Maccabees I&II
- **Books of Wisdom**
Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Wisdom, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus)
- **Prophets**
Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Baruch, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

(45 if you count Jeremiah & Lamentations as one)

The New Testament: 27 books

- **Gospels:** Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
- **Acts of the Apostles**
- **Letters of St. Paul:** Romans, 1 & 2, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2, Thessalonians, 1 & 2, Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews
- **Letter of James**
- **Letters of Peter, 1 & 2**
- **Letters of John, 1, 2, & 3**
- **Letter of Jude**
- **Revelations** (Apocalypse).