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ELEMENTS OF THE DIDACHE BIBLE

AN INTRODUCTION TO EACH SECTION OF THE DIDACHE BIBLE

With titles such as “The Pentateuch” and “New Testament Letters,” each section of the Bible begins with an introduction from the contributors to the *New American Bible, Revised Edition*. This introduction explains the general character of the group of books that follows and how it fits into the larger scope of the Bible and of salvation history.

THE WISDOM BOOKS

“Wisdom” is a convenient umbrella term to designate the books of Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes (Qohleleth), Wisdom, and Sirach (Ecclesiasticus). Two other books are often associated with them: Psalms, a collection of mostly devotional lyrics, and the Song of Songs, a collection of love poems. All are marked by a skillful use of parallelism, or verses of balanced and symmetrical phrases. These works have been classified as wisdom or didactic literature, so called because their general purpose is instruction.

A striking feature of the wisdom books is the absence of references to the promises made to the patriarchs or to Moses, or to Sinai or typical items in Israelite tradition; Sirach (chaps. 44–50) and Wisdom (chaps. 10–19) are the exception. Biblical wisdom literature concentrates on daily human experience: how is life to be lived? In this respect it is comparable to other ancient Near Eastern compositions from Mesopotamia and Egypt that also reflect on the problems of everyday life. The literary style is striking: aphorisms, numerical sayings, paradoxes, instructions, alphabetic acrostics and acrostic poems, lively speeches, and so forth. Wisdom itself is an art, a skill with various situations and achieve a good life. And it is also a treasure of wisdom, garnered from experience were transmitted at various levels, from the home all the way to training in the court. Belief in the wisdom and acceptance of the prevailing codes of conduct were presupposed; the goal was the training of youths. The task of wisdom is character formation: what is the wise path to follow? The lessons are conveyed by observations that are as well as by admonitions that warn. Although the need of discipline is

AN INTRODUCTION TO EACH BOOK OF THE DIDACHE BIBLE

Each book of the Bible begins with its own introduction from the contributors to the *New American Bible, Revised Edition*. This introduction explains some of the theological, pedagogical, historical, and other aspects of the book. (A few books that are very closely related, e.g., 1 and 2 Samuel, share one introduction.) At the end of most introductions is an outline of the principal divisions of the book.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

The Gospel according to John is quite different in character from the three synoptic gospels. It is highly literary and symbolic. It does not follow the same order or reproduce the same stories as the synoptic gospels. To a much greater degree, it is the product of a developed theological reflection and grows out of a different circle and tradition. It was probably written in the 90s of the first century.

The Gospel of John begins with a magnificent prologue, which states many of the major themes and motifs of the gospel, much as an overture does for a musical work. The prologue proclaims Jesus as the preexistent and incarnate Word of God who has revealed the Father to us. The rest of the first chapter forms the introduction to the gospel proper and consists of the Baptist's testimony about Jesus (there is no baptism of Jesus in this gospel—John simply points him out as the Lamb of God, followed by stories of the call of the first disciples, in which various titles predicated of Jesus in the early church are presented).

The gospel narrative contains a series of “signs”—the gospel's word for the wondrous deeds of Jesus. The author is primarily interested in the significance of these deeds, and so interprets them for the reader by various reflections, narratives, and discourses. The first sign is the transformation of water into wine at Cana (Jn 2:1–11); this represents the replacement of the Jewish ceremonial washings and symbolizes the entire creative and transforming work of Jesus. The second sign, the cure of the royal official's son (Jn 4:46–54) simply by the word of Jesus at a distance, signifies the power of Jesus' life-giving word. The same theme is further

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF EACH BOOK OF THE DIDACHE BIBLE

Following the introduction is a brief overview from the editorial board for the *Didache Bible*. This one-page overview, set apart by a rounded border, presents some of the prevailing and minority opinions about the authorship, the date of composition, the intended audience, and the main themes of the book. (A few books that are very closely related, e.g., 1 and 2 Samuel, share one brief overview.)

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE LETTER OF JUDE

AUTHOR: Some of the early Church Fathers believed the author of this Epistle to be St. Jude Thaddeus, the Apostle, but most scholars today identify him as another St. Jude, the brother of St. James, the first Bishop of Jerusalem and a kinsman of Christ (cf. Mt 13:55). St. Jude draws his reputation both as a cousin of Christ and as a brother of the renowned bishop.

DATE: Because it lacks any reference to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem AD 70, many scholars date this Epistle between AD 50 and 70. Others argue that it was composed as late as AD 90 to 100.

AUDIENCE: The identification of St. Jude with St. James in the salutation may indicate that the intended audience was the same as James, since they already regarded St. James as an authority. The mention of Jewish traditions and writings outside of the Scriptures—St. Jude alludes to the apocryphal Assumption of Moses and the Book of Enoch (cf. verses 9:14)—might also indicate that the Epistle was written to a largely Jewish-Christian audience. Whatever the case, it would appear that Jude was meant for wide circulation and is thus included among the “catholic Epistles” of the New Testament.

MAIN THEMES: The theme of the Epistle is similar to that of the other catholic Epistles: Stand firm in the Faith in the face of temptations and false teachers, “many persons who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny

THE COMPOSITION OF EACH PAGE OF THE DIDACHE BIBLE

A. The text of Scripture.

The text of the *New American Bible, Revised Edition*, is presented in two columns at the top of each page.

B. Scriptural cross-references.

Scriptural cross-references from the *New American Bible, Revised Edition*, are set off by solid lines.

C. Footnotes.

The footnotes from the contributors to the *New American Bible, Revised Edition*, are presented in two columns.

D. Didache commentary.

Catechetical commentary from the editorial board for the *Didache Bible* is presented in a white box.

E. Related Didache commentary.

On some pages, in a light red box, there is additional commentary by the editorial board for the *Didache Bible* that is related to the text on that page.

GENESIS 6:20

24

creatures you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, one male and one female,* to keep them alive along with you.²⁰ Of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal, and of every kind of thing that crawls on the ground, two of each will come to you, that you may keep them alive.²¹ Moreover, you are to provide yourself with all the food that is to be eaten, and store it away, that it may serve as provisions for you and for them.²² Noah complied; he did just as God had commanded him.*

CHAPTER 7

¹Then the LORD said to Noah: Go into the ark, you and all your household, for you alone in this generation have I found to be righteous before me.^a ²Of every clean animal, take with you seven pairs, a male and its mate; and of the unclean animals, one pair, a male and its mate;³ likewise, of every bird of the air, seven pairs, a male and a female, to keep their progeny alive over all the earth.⁴ For seven days from now I will bring rain down on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and so I will wipe out from the face of the earth every being that I have made.^b ⁵Noah complied, just as the LORD had commanded.

a. Gen 6:9-10; Sir 44:17; 2 Pt 2:5. b. Gen 6:17; 2 Pt 2:5. c. Wis 14:6; 1 Pt 3:20; 2 Pt 2:5. d. Gn 6:19.

6:19-21 You shall bring two of every kind... one male and one female: For the Priestly source (P), there is no distinction between clean and unclean animals until Sinai (Lv 11), no altars or sacrifice until Sinai, and all diet is vegetarian (Gn 1:29-30); even after the flood P has no distinction between clean and unclean, since "any living creature that moves about" may be eaten (9:3). Thus P has Noah take the minimum to preserve all species, one pair of each without distinction between clean and unclean, but he must also take on provisions for food (6:21). The Yahwist source (J), which assumes the clean-unclean distinction always existed but knows no other restriction on eating meat (Abel

The Great Flood. ⁶Noah was six hundred years old when the flood came upon the earth. ⁷Together with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives, Noah went into the ark because of the waters of the flood.^c ⁸Of the clean animals and the unclean, of the birds, and of everything that crawls on the ground, ⁹two by two, male and female came to Noah into the ark, just as God had commanded him.^d ¹⁰When the seven days were over, the water of the flood came upon the earth.

¹¹On the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month: on that day

All the fountains of the great abyss* burst forth, and the floodgates of the sky were opened.

¹²For forty days and forty nights heavy rain poured down on the earth.

¹³On the very same day, Noah and his sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of Noah's sons had entered the ark, ¹⁴together with every kind of wild animal, every kind of tame animal, every kind of crawling thing that crawls on the earth, and every kind of bird.

was a shepherd and offered meat as a sacrifice), requires additional clean animals ("seven pairs") for food and sacrifice (7:2-3; 8:20).

6:22 Just as God had commanded him: as in the creation of the world in chap. 1 and in the building of the tabernacle in Ex 25-31, 35-40 (all from the Priestly source), everything takes place by the command of God. In this passage and in Exodus, the commands of God are carried out to the letter by human agents, Noah and Moses. Divine speech is important. God speaks to Noah seven times in the flood story.

7:11 Abyss: the subterranean ocean; see note on 1:2.

7:4 Seven days: The time period recalls the act of creation and suggests that the renewal of the earth by the waters of the Flood is a type of "re-creation." We, who know neither the time of our own death nor the hour of Christ's Second Coming, are always called to repentance. (CCC 56, 337-339)

FORTY IS A SYMBOLIC NUMBER IN SCRIPTURE. The forty days and forty nights of rainfall is symbolic of a period of preparation, akin to the forty years the Israelites wandered in the wilderness before entering the Holy Land and the forty days and nights Christ fasted in the wilderness before beginning his public ministry. We observe forty days of Lent in preparation for the celebration of Easter. Appropriately, the Flood is recalled in the Blessing of Baptismal Water during the Mass of Easter Vigil: "O God, who by the outpouring of the flood / foreshadowed regeneration, / so that from the mystery of one and the same element of water / would come an end to vice and a beginning of virtue..." (CCC 701, 1238)

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Genesis is the first book of the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), the first section of the Jewish and the Christian Scriptures. Its title in English, "Genesis," comes from the Greek of Gn 2:4, literally, "the book of the generation (*genesis*) of the heavens and earth." Its title in the Jewish Scriptures is the opening Hebrew word, *Bereshit*, "in the beginning."

The book has two major sections—the creation and expansion of the human race (2:4—11:9), and the story of Abraham and his descendants (11:10—50:26). The first section deals with God and the nations, and the second deals with God and a particular nation, Israel. The opening creation account (1:1—2:3) lifts up two themes that play major roles in each section—the divine command to the first couple (standing for the whole race) to produce offspring and to possess land (1:28). In the first section, progeny and land appear in the form of births and genealogies (chaps. 2–9) and allotment of land (chaps. 10–11), and in the second, progeny and land appear in the form of promises of descendants and land to the ancestors. Another indication of editing is the formulaic introduction, "this is the story; these are the descendants" (Hebrew *tōledôt*), which occurs five times in Section I (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 10:31) and five times in Section II (11:10; 25:12, 19; 36:1 [v. 9 is an addition]; 37:2).

The Composition of the Book. For the literary sources of Genesis, see Introduction to the Pentateuch. As far as the sources of Genesis are concerned, contemporary readers can reasonably assume that ancient traditions (J and E) were edited in the sixth or fifth century B.C. for a Jewish audience that had suffered the effects of the exile and was now largely living outside of Palestine. The editor highlighted themes of vital concern to this audience: God intends that every nation have posterity and land; the ancestors of Israel are models for their descendants who also live in hope rather than in full possession of what has been promised; the ancient covenant with God is eternal, remaining valid even when the human party has been unfaithful. By highlighting such concerns, the editor addressed the worries of exiled Israel and indeed of contemporary Jews and Christians.

Genesis 1–11. The seven-day creation account in Gn 1:1–2:3 tells of a God whose mere word creates a beautiful universe in which human beings are an integral and important part. Though Gn 2:4—3:24 is often regarded as "the second creation story," the text suggests that the whole of 2:4—11:9 tells one story. The plot of Gn 2–11 (creation, the flood, renewed creation) has been borrowed from creation-flood stories attested in Mesopotamian literature of the second and early first millennia. In the Mesopotamian creation-flood stories, the gods created the human race as slaves whose task it was to manage the universe for them—giving them food, clothing, and honor in temple ceremonies. In an unforeseen development, however, the human race grew so numerous and noisy that the gods could not sleep. Deeply angered, the gods decided to destroy the race by a universal flood. One man and his family, however, secretly warned of the flood by his patron god, built a boat and survived. Soon regretting their impetuous decision, the gods created a revised version of humankind. The new race was created mortal so they would never again grow numerous and bother the gods. The authors of Genesis adapted the creation-flood story in accord with their views of God and humanity. For example, they attributed the fault to human sin rather than to divine miscalculation (6:5–7) and had God reaffirm without change the original creation (9:1–7). In the biblical version God is just, powerful, and not needy.

How should modern readers interpret the creation-flood story in Gn 2–11? The stories are neither history nor myth. "Myth" is an unsuitable term, for it has several different meanings and connotes untruth in popular English. "History" is equally misleading, for it suggests that the events actually took place. The best term is creation-flood story. Ancient Near Eastern thinkers did not have our methods of exploring serious questions. Instead, they used narratives for issues that we would call philosophical and theological. They added and subtracted narrative details and varied the plot as they sought meaning in the ancient stories. Their stories reveal a privileged time, when divine decisions were made that determined the future of the human race. The origin of something was thought to explain its present meaning, e.g., how God acts with justice and generosity, why human beings are rebellious, the nature of sexual attraction and marriage, why there are many peoples and languages. Though the stories may initially strike us as primitive and naive, they are in fact told with skill, compression, and subtlety. They provide profound answers to perennial questions about God and human beings.

Genesis 11–50. One Jewish tradition suggests that God, having been rebuffed in the attempt to forge a relationship with the nations, decided to concentrate on one nation in the hope that it would eventually

bring in all the nations. The migration of Abraham's family (11:26–31) is part of the general movement of the human race to take possession of their lands (see 10:32—11:9). Abraham, however, must come into possession of his land in a manner different from the nations, for he will not immediately possess it nor will he have descendants in the manner of the nations, for he is old and his wife is childless (12:1–9). Abraham and Sarah have to live with their God in trust and obedience until at last Isaac is born to them and they manage to buy a sliver of the land (the burial cave at Machpelah, chap. 23). Abraham's humanity and faith offer a wonderful example to the exilic generation.

The historicity of the ancestral stories has been much discussed. Scholars have traditionally dated them sometime in the first half of the second millennium, though a few regard them as late (sixth or fifth century B.C.) and purely fictional. There is unfortunately no direct extra-biblical evidence confirming (or disproving) the stories. The ancestral stories have affinities, however, to late second-millennium stories of childless ancestors, and their proper names fit linguistic patterns attested in the second millennium. Given the lack of decisive evidence, it is reasonable to accept the Bible's own chronology that the patriarchs were the ancestors of Israel and that they lived well before the exodus that is generally dated in the thirteenth century.

Gn 25:19—35:43 are about Jacob and his twelve sons. The stories are united by a geographical frame: Jacob lives in Canaan until his theft of the right of the firstborn from his brother Esau forces him to flee to Paddan-Aram (alternately Aram-Naharaim). There his uncle Laban tricks him as he earlier tricked his brother. But Jacob is blessed with wealth and sons. He returns to Canaan to receive the final blessing, land, and on the way is reconciled with his brother Esau. As the sons have reached the number of twelve, the patriarch can be given the name Israel (32:28; 35:10). The blessings given to Abraham are reaffirmed to Isaac and to Jacob.

The last cycle of ancestor stories is about Jacob's son Joseph (37:1—50:26, though in chaps. 48–49 the focus swings back to Jacob). The Joseph stories are sophisticated in theme, deftly plotted, and show keen interest in the psychology of the characters. Jacob's favoring of Joseph, the son of his beloved wife Rachel, provokes his brothers to kill him. Joseph escapes death through the intercession of Reuben, the eldest, and of Judah, but is sold into slavery in Egypt. In the immediately following chap. 38, Judah undergoes experiences similar to Joseph's. Joseph, endowed by God with wisdom, becomes second only to Pharaoh in Egypt. From that powerful position, he encounters his unsuspecting brothers who have come to Egypt because of the famine, and tests them to see if they have repented. Joseph learns that they have given up their hatred because of their love for Israel, their father, who seems to have inherited the mantle of the failed oldest brother Reuben, expresses the brothers' new and profound appreciation of their father and Joseph (chap. 44). At the end of Genesis, the entire family of Jacob/Israel is in Egypt, which prepares for the events in the Book of Exodus.

Genesis in Later Biblical Books. The historical and prophetic books constantly refer to the covenant with the ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Hos 10 sees the traits of Jacob in the behavior of the Israel of his own day. Is 51:2 cites Abraham and Sarah as a model for his dispirited community, for though only a couple, they became a great nation. Jn 1, "In the beginning was the word," alludes to Gn 1:1 (and Prv 8:22) to show that Jesus is creating a new world. St. Paul interprets Jesus as the New Adam in Rom 5:14 and 1 Cor 15:22, 24, whose obedience brings life just as the Old Adam's disobedience brought death. In Rom 4, Paul cites Abraham as someone who was righteous in God's eyes centuries before the Law was given at Sinai.

Outline of Genesis

Preamble. The Creation of the World (1:1—2:3)

I. The Story of the Nations (2:4—11:26)

A. The Creation of the Man and the Woman, Their Offspring, and the Spread of Civilization (2:4—4:26)

B. The Pre-flood Generations (5:1—6:8)

C. The Flood and the Renewed Blessing (6:9—9:29)

D. The Populating of the World and the Prideful City (10:1—11:9)

E. The Genealogy from Shem to Terah (11:10—26)

II. The Story of the Ancestors of Israel (11:27—50:26)

A. The Story of Abraham and Sarah (11:27—25:18)

B. The Story of Isaac and Jacob (25:19—36:43)

C. The Story of Joseph (37:1—50:26)

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF GENESIS

AUTHOR AND DATE: The first five books of the Old Testament are collectively known as the Pentateuch; the Books of Moses; or the *Torah*, or Law, of Moses, and the Book of Genesis is the first of these books. The five books of the Pentateuch are an assembly of materials composed over several centuries before finally being compiled, rearranged, and edited into their present form around the sixth century BC. Any written source materials are lost to antiquity, but some modern scholars identify certain strands of tradition they believe arose from particular historical periods. These include the Jahwist, or Yahwist, tradition (eleventh to tenth centuries BC), which provided a kind of prologue from the story of creation to the giving of the Law to Moses; the Elohist tradition, which emphasized religious traditions developed among the ten northern tribes of Samaria (ninth century to eighth century BC); the Deuteronomic tradition, which stressed the details of the Mosaic Law (seventh century BC); and the Priestly tradition, which encouraged ritual purity and laws of worship (sixth century BC). However, debate over the identification of these traditions continues, and some scholars believe that the redactors, or editors, of the Pentateuch contributed much original material as well.

Whatever the case, it is safe to say that Genesis, like the Pentateuch in general, had multiple sources that were edited and rewritten by anonymous sacred writers under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and scholars generally identify elements of the Jahwist, Elohist, and Priestly traditions within Genesis.

AUDIENCE: Genesis and the other books of the Pentateuch were compiled in their present form for the people of Israel after many had returned from the Babylonian Exile in the sixth century BC. They were then under Persian rule, and the proclamation of the Law of Moses represented a means to restore Israel's faith, practice, and worship over and against the culture of paganism.

MAIN THEMES: Genesis can be seen as comprising two main parts. The first (cf. 1:1—11:9) begins with the stories of creation and continues through to the story of the Tower of Babel. The narrative is not scientific or historical but rather a kind of prologue that uses literary images and symbolic language to express fundamental truths about God, the nature of humanity, and sin. Among other things it teaches that God is the eternal Creator of Heaven and earth. Man and woman were created in the image and likeness of God in a state of original holiness and justice and were endowed with free will. Woman was created as equal with and complementary to man. Our first parents were created in a state of marriage, which is a faithful and exclusive union oriented toward the generation and education of children. Adam and Eve misused their free will to choose sin and disobedience and as a consequence lost their original state of holiness and justice. As a result of this Original Sin, they suffered concupiscence, suffering and death, and the transmission of Original Sin to their descendants. God promised to send a redeemer (cf. 3:15), yet people descended deeper into sin and became lost and corrupt.

The second part of Genesis (cf. 11:10—50:26) involves the history of the patriarchs of Israel, beginning with the call of Abraham and continuing to the death of Joseph in Egypt. It is here that the central theme of Genesis emerges: God has made Israel his Chosen People to prepare them for the coming Messiah. In Genesis it is the patriarchs who remain faithful to God and serve as bearers of his covenant. They will prepare the way for the next stage of Revelation, which is detailed in the Book of Exodus: the call of Moses, the liberation from Egypt, and the giving of the Law.

GENESIS

PREAMBLE. THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

CHAPTER 1

The Story of Creation^a ¹In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth^a—²* and the earth was without

form or shape, with darkness over the abyss and a mighty wind sweeping over the waters—^b

³Then God said: Let there be light, and there was light.^c ⁴God saw that the light was good. God then separated the light

a. Gn 2:1, 4; 2 Mc 7:28; Ps 8:4; 33:6; 89:12; 90:2; Wis 11:17; Sir 16:24; Jer 10:12; Acts 14:15; Col 1:16–17; Heb 1:2–3; 3:4; 11:3; Rev 4:11. b. Jer 4:23. c. 2 Cor 4:6.

1:1—2:3 This section, from the Priestly source, functions as an introduction, as ancient stories of the origin of the world (cosmogonies) often did. It introduces the primordial story (2:4—11:26), the stories of the ancestors (11:27—50:26), and indeed the whole Pentateuch. The chapter highlights the goodness of creation and the divine desire that human beings share in that goodness. God brings an orderly universe out of primordial chaos merely by uttering a word. In the literary structure of six days, the creation events in the first three days are related to those in the second three.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. light (day)/darkness = 4. sun/moon (night) | |
| 2. arrangement of water = 5. fish + birds from waters | |
| 3. a) dry land = 6. a) animals | |
| b) vegetation = b) human beings: male / female | |

The seventh day, on which God rests, the climax of the account, falls outside the six-day structure.

Until modern times the first line was always translated, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Several comparable ancient cosmogonies, discovered in recent times, have a “when... then” construction, confirming the translation “when... then” here as well. “When” introduces the pre-creation state and “then” introduces the creative act affecting that state. The traditional translation, “In the beginning,” does not reflect the Hebrew syntax of the clause.

1:2 This verse is parenthetical, describing in three phases the pre-creation state symbolized by the chaos out of which God brings order: “earth,” hidden beneath the encompassing cosmic waters, could not be seen, and thus had no “form”; there was only darkness; turbulent wind swept over the

1—3 The story of creation presents eternal truths about God and humanity and about the nature and significance of creation. Creation takes on the powerful significance that man and woman are created in the image and likeness of God. Furthermore, through the violation of God’s Law, the first human beings, Adam and Eve, brought sin into the world. Hence, Genesis marks the beginning of salvation history; a history that will be completed at the end of time as related in the final chapters of Revelation. While the Church looks at the literal sense and meaning of the creation story, i.e., the meaning conveyed by the words, it does not require a literalistic approach as if the purpose of God’s Revelation were to provide a scientific explanation of the universe, nor is it opposed to various scientific theories as long as the divine origin of creation and God’s plan and providence are not denied. Faith and science, in the Genesis story, complement each other, and there is ample room for modern scientific enquiry and explanation that is compatible with God being the ultimate cause of the created world. (CCC 121–123, 128–130, 199, 280, 289, 337–354; CSDC 451)

1:1 *In the beginning... heavens and the earth*: This simple statement that initiates the first book of the Old Testament reveals that God is eternal, i.e., his existence transcends time, and all time is eternally present for him. Second, God is omnipotent. Everything that exists originated with him. By his Word, he brought all of creation into existence without the use of pre-existing materials. Finally, God alone is the Creator, and he has authority over all creation. We affirm God as Father and omnipotent Creator when we pray the first lines of both the Nicene Creed and the Apostles’ Creed. (CCC 268, 279–280, 290–295)

1:2–3 Creation was a work of each Person of the Trinity. Because God is entirely one in the three divine Persons, each Person of the Trinity participates equally in every divine act. *A mighty wind... waters*: God the Holy Spirit was active in the creation of the world, and the Rite of Blessing of Baptismal Water at the Easter Vigil acknowledges this role: “O God, whose Spirit / in the first moments of the world’s creation / hovered over the waters, / so that the very substance of water / would even then take to itself the power to sanctify...” (*Roman Missal*, Easter Vigil, 46). In the prologue of John’s Gospel, we read how Christ, “the Word was with God, / and the Word was God,” and “was in the beginning with God. / All things came to be through him, / and without him nothing came to be” (Jn 1:1–3). God the Father creates through his Word, God the Son. (CCC 243, 292, 702–704, 1217–1218)

from the darkness. ⁵God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” Evening came, and morning followed—the first day.*

⁶Then God said: Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters, to separate one body of water from the other. ⁷God made the dome,* and it separated the water below the dome from the water above the dome. And so it happened.^d ⁸God called the dome “sky.” Evening came, and morning followed—the second day.

⁹Then God said: Let the water under the sky be gathered into a single basin, so that the dry land may appear. And so it happened: the water under the sky was gathered into its basin, and the dry land appeared.^e ¹⁰God called the dry land “earth,” and the basin of water he called “sea.” God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then God said: Let the earth bring forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it. And so it

happened: ¹²the earth brought forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree that bears fruit with its seed in it. God saw that it was good. ¹³Evening came, and morning followed—the third day.

¹⁴Then God said: Let there be lights in the dome of the sky, to separate day from night. Let them mark the seasons, the days and the years,^g ¹⁵and serve as lights in the dome of the sky, to illuminate the earth. And so it happened: ¹⁶God made the two great lights, the greater one to govern the day, and the lesser one to govern the night, and the stars.^h ¹⁷God set them in the dome of the sky, to illuminate the earth, ¹⁸to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw that it was good. ¹⁹Evening came, and morning followed—the fourth day.

²⁰Then God said: Let the water teem with an abundance of living creatures, and on the earth let birds fly beneath the dome of the sky. ²¹God created the great sea monsters

d. Prv 8:27–28; 2 Pt 3:5. e. Jb 38:8; Ps 33:7; Jer 5:22. f. Ps 104:14.
g. Jb 26:10; Ps 19:2–3; Bar 3:33. h. Dt 4:19; Ps 136:7–9; Wis 13:2–4; Jer 31:35. i. Jb 12:7–10.

waters. Commencing with the last-named elements (darkness and water), vv. 3–10 describe the rearrangement of this chaos: light is made (first day) and the water is divided into water above and water below the earth so that the earth appears and is no longer “without outline.” The abyss: the primordial ocean according to the ancient-Semitic cosmogony. After God’s creative activity, part of this vast body forms the salt water seas (vv. 9–10); part of it is the fresh water under the earth (Ps 33:7; Ez 31:4), which wells forth on the earth as springs and fountains (Gn 7:11; 8:2; Prv 3:20). Part of it, “the upper water” (Ps 148:4; Dn 3:60), is held up by the

dome of the sky (vv. 6–7), from which rain descends on the earth (Gn 7:11; 2 Kgs 7:2, 19; Ps 104:13). A mighty wind: literally, “spirit or breath [*ruah*] of God”; cf. Gn 8:1.

1:5 In ancient Israel a day was considered to begin at sunset.

1:7 **The dome:** the Hebrew word suggests a gigantic metal dome. It was inserted into the middle of the single body of water to form dry space within which the earth could emerge. The Latin Vulgate translation *firmamentum*, “means of support (for the upper waters); firmament,” provided the traditional English rendering.

1:3 The light that pierces the darkness symbolizes the light of faith, which God gives to those to whom he wishes to reveal himself. (CCC 298)

1:4–31 Because God is All-good and All-loving, everything he creates is good. The created world gives glory to God by serving human beings. It is a gift of God bestowed on humanity to be developed, and we are entrusted with its care. The Church has always taught the inherent goodness of creation, particularly in the face of certain heresies such as Gnosticism, which viewed the physical world, including the human body, as intrinsically evil. God created the world through his eternal wisdom in a systematic and orderly fashion. Contrary to the beliefs of most pagan religions at that time, Genesis reveals that heavenly bodies and the various components of the created world are not deities; rather, they are creations of the one true God that reflect God’s wisdom and intelligence. The human being is the pinnacle of creation, since man and woman have been created to enjoy a personal relationship with God. (CCC 295–299, 309–310, 2402)

DIVINE WORSHIP IS WRITTEN INTO THE RHYTHM OF CREATION. God created the sun to give us cycles of night and day and the moon and seasons to give us cycles of the year. He created the world in six days, reserving the seventh as a day of rest. This is the origin of the week and the Sabbath rest. The early Christian church recognized Sunday as the day of worship and rest in commemoration of the Resurrection and the new creation in Christ. (CCC 345–349)

and all kinds of crawling living creatures with which the water teems, and all kinds of winged birds. God saw that it was good,²² and God blessed them, saying: Be fertile, multiply, and fill the water of the seas; and let the birds multiply on the earth.^j ²³ Evening came, and morning followed—the fifth day.

^{24k} Then God said: Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature: tame animals, crawling things, and every kind of wild animal. And so it happened: ²⁵ God made every kind of wild animal, every kind of tame animal, and every kind of thing that crawls on the ground. God saw that it

was good. ^{26l} Then God said: Let us make* human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth.

²⁷ God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female* he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them and God said to them: Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.* Have dominion over the

j. Gn 8:17. k. Sir 16:27–28.
l. Gn 5:1, 3; 9:6; Ps 8:5–6; Wis 2:23; 10:2; Sir 17:1, 3–4; Mt 19:4; Mk 10:6; Jas 3:7; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10.

1:26 Let us make: in the ancient Near East, and sometimes in the Bible, God was imagined as presiding over an assembly of heavenly beings who deliberated and decided about matters on earth (1 Kgs 22:19–22; Is 6:8; Ps 29:1–2; 82; 89:6–7; Jb 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). This scene accounts for the plural form here and in Gn 11:7 (“Let us go down...”). Israel’s God was always considered “Most High” over the heavenly beings. **Human beings:** Hebrew *‘ādām* is here the generic term for humankind; in the first five chapters of Genesis it is the proper name Adam only at 4:25 and 5:1–5. **In our image, after our likeness:** “image” and “likeness” (virtually synonyms) express the worth of human beings who have value in themselves (human blood may not be shed in 9:6 because of this image of God) and

in their task, dominion (1:28), which promotes the rule of God over the universe.

1:27 Male and female: as God provided the plants with seeds (vv. 11, 12) and commanded the animals to be fertile and multiply (v. 22), so God gives sexuality to human beings as their means to continue in existence.

1:28 Fill the earth, and subdue it: the object of the verb “subdue” may be not the earth as such but earth, as the territory each nation must take for itself (chaps. 10–11), just as Israel will later do (see Num 32:22, 29; Jos 18:1). The two divine commands define the basic tasks of the human race—to continue in existence through generation and to take possession of one’s God-given territory. The dual command would have had special meaning

1:26–29 While material creation reveals vestiges of God’s beauty, power, and intelligence, human beings, who are spiritual and corporal, are made in God’s own image and likeness. Human nature comprises a material body and an immortal soul. This union of both the physical and the spiritual represents a microcosm of the entire creation. Because we are made in God’s image and likeness, possessing intelligence and free will, the human person enjoys an exalted dignity and a capacity for a loving relationship with God. (CCC 36, 225, 343, 355, 1702–1705, 2427, 2501, 2809; CSDC 108–111, 113)

1:26–27 Let us make: Christian tradition has long understood the use of the plural here as pointing possibly to the fact that each Person of the Trinity was involved in the act of creation. *Let them have dominion:* The sense here is of stewardship rather than unlimited control. Good stewardship requires a judicious use and distribution of the goods and resources of the earth so the freedom and dignity of every human person is acknowledged and everyone’s right to participate in the good of creation is respected. Human solidarity should always be oriented toward ensuring that everyone has his or her basic needs met—including food, water, and shelter—and that natural resources are sustainable for future generations. (CCC 307, 1942, 2402)

1:27–28 Be fertile and multiply: The first man and woman were created by God in the state of marriage as the first “communion of persons.” Marriage, therefore, is of divine origin and as such represents a sacred covenant that must be kept permanent. Because God is love and we are created in his image, we have an intrinsic and fundamental vocation to love. For the great majority of people, this love is expressed in marriage, which is a reflection of the intimate love between the divine Persons of the Trinity. Beyond the bonds of marriage, man and woman were created not as solitary beings but as social beings who can only find and live their true vocations in relation to others. (CCC 371–372, 383, 1601–1607, 1652, 2331; CSDC 36–37, 149, 428)

1:28–31 Fill the earth and subdue it: The intelligence, free will, and power of reason given to human beings make it possible to bring creation to completion through work and ingenuity. The good of creation are resources that are meant for the common good of everyone, present and future.

THE DIVIDED KINGDOMS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH



GLOSSARY

AARON: Older brother of Moses who served as his spokesman (Ex 4:10–17). With his sons, designated by God as the first priests of Israel.

ABADDON: The underworld, or dwelling place of the dead; also called *Sheol*, *Hades*, or *Gehenna* (Prv 27:20); also, the name given to the “angel of the abyss” (Rev 9:11). (Hebrew *abhaddon*, “destruction”)

ABBA: Father; used by children to denote an intimate, familiar relationship (Mk 14:36; Rom 8:15). (Aramaic)

ABEDNEGO: See AZARIAH

ABEL: Adam and Eve’s second son, who was murdered by his brother Cain out of jealousy because his sacrifice was acceptable to God but Cain’s was not (Gn 4:1–12). See also CAIN

ABIATHAR: A high priest and the sole survivor of Saul’s slaughter of the priests at Nob (1 Sm 22:19–21). He advised David and helped return the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem but was banished by Solomon.

ABIGAIL: 1. David’s wife after the death of her husband, Nabal (1 Sm 25); she had assisted David during his flight from Saul.
2. A sister of David.

ABIJAH: King of Judah; son of Rehoboam; defeated Jeroboam in battle (2 Chr 13).

ABIMELECH: 1. Son of Gideon; killed all of his brothers but one after his father’s death and ruled from Shechem three years before being killed (Jgs 8:31–9:5). 2. A high priest in David’s time (Ps 34:1). 3. The name, or possibly the title, of several Philistine rulers (Gn 26:1).

ABLUTION: The act of washing oneself for ritual purification.

ABOMINATION: In the Hebrew sense, something wicked, vile, or sinful; sometimes indicates something ritually impure but often a particularly offensive sin. (Latin *abominari*, “to deprecate as a bad omen”)

ABRAHAM: Originally Abram, God changed his name. Descendent of Shem and founder of the Hebrew nation; first to receive a personal call from God, and he responded with obedience and humility (Gn 17:1–8). (Hebrew uncertain, perhaps “father of a multitude” [Gn 17:5]) See also ABRAM

ABRAHAM’S BOSOM: A metaphor for the place of comfort where those who had died in God’s favor awaited judgment before the Resurrection of Christ (Lk 16:19–31). In Old Testament tradition the just were received by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at a heavenly banquet.

ABRAM: Abraham’s name before he was renamed by God (Gn 12–17). (“Exalted father”; Hebrew uncertain) See also ABRAHAM

ABSALOM: 1. Eldest son of David; killed his half-brother Amnon in revenge for the rape of his sister Tamar (2 Sm 13), revolted against his father at Hebron, declared himself king, but was killed in battle. 2. A Maccabean revolutionary (1 Mc 13:11; 2 Mc 11:17).

ABSTAIN: Refrain from food or a pleasurable act for ritual purity or mortification.

ABYSS: The primeval waters of Creation, or the deep waters thought to exist under the earth. In the New Testament, the abode of the dead (Rev 9:1), or Hell itself.

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ABRAHAM: *Covenant with God:* Gn 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 22:15-18; Ex 2:24; 1 Chr 16:16; Neh 9:7-8; Bar 2:34; Mi 7:20; Lk 1:68-75; Rom 4. *Father of a great nation:* Gn 17:5; 18:18; Sir 44:19; Gal 3:8. *Jews as children of Abraham:* 1 Chr 16:13; 1 Mc 12:21; Lk 3:8; Jn 8:33; Acts 3:25; 13:26; Rom 9:7; 11:1; 2 Cor 11:22; Gal 3:29. *Justified by faith:* 1 Mc 2:52; Rom 4; Gal 3:6-9. *Life:* Gn 12-26. *Tested by God:* Gn 22:1-18; Jdt 8:26; Heb 11:17-19.

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