

THE DIDACHE BIBLE

With commentaries based on the
Catechism of the Catholic Church

Ignatius Bible Edition

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THE FIRST BOOK OF MOSES COMMONLY CALLED **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 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 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); the Jahwist, or Yahwist, tradition, which grew out of the Deuteronomic tradition and provided a kind of prologue from the story of creation to the giving of the Law to Moses; 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 they 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—11:26) 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. 11:27—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

Six Days of Creation and the Sabbath

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.²The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.

³And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

⁶And God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters."⁷And God made the firmament and separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the

firmament. And it was so. ⁸And God called the firmament Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

⁹And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. ¹¹And God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, upon the earth." And it was so. ¹²The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

1:1 Jn 1:1

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 God created the 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. *The Spirit of God... 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)

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

¹⁴And God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also. ¹⁷And God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

²⁰And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heavens."²¹ So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every

winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." ²³And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

²⁴And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. ²⁵And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the cattle according to their kinds, and everything that creeps upon the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." ²⁷So God created man in his own

1:26, 27 Gn 5:1; Mt 19:4; Mk 10:6; Col 3:10; Jas 3:9

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)

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 fruitful 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

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)

image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸And God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” ²⁹And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. ³⁰And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. ³¹And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ²And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. ³So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation.

Another Account of Creation

⁴These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; ⁶but a mist went up from the

2:1–3 Ex 20:11

2:2 Heb 4:4, 10

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. Wasteful practices and unbridled accumulation of the earth’s resources constitute sins against the Seventh Commandment. There is an obvious moral dimension to our dominion of nature: It is not to be exercised capriciously or destructively but rather responsibly

and generously. (CCC 307, 373, 2415, 2456–2457; CSDC 255)

2:1–3 On the seventh day God rested and contemplated the goodness of his creation. By blessing this day and making it holy, he established what would become the Sabbath rest under the Mosaic Law. All of creation is oriented toward the Sabbath, which provides us the opportunity to worship and adore God, our Father and Creator. It is our duty to respect the natural law that God has written into creation and on the human heart. An important aspect of the natural moral law is to acknowledge God’s goodness and infinite transcendence. It follows that a more focused worship of God includes a special day called the Sabbath. (CCC 314, 345–348)

2:7–9 In the second story of creation, we see both the physical and spiritual aspects of human beings. Man was formed out of the earth, giving him a physical body, and then God breathed into man the “breath of life,” animating him and endowing him with a spiritual soul. The Hebrew *ruah* means both “breath” and “spirit.”

BY GIVING US THE SABBATH, God affirmed that our lives need to be structured by both work and rest. The observance of Sunday as the Christian day of rest and worship intends in part to allow the faithful to rejuvenate their minds and bodies as they worship God and build relationships within the family, culture, and society. Leisure activities are encouraged as long as they do not infringe on the time for proper worship that should be given to God on that day. Time with family, works of mercy, and works of charity are activities that help sanctify the Lord’s Day; attention should also be given to prayer, meditation, reflection, spiritual reading, and other such exercises that nurture our spiritual lives. The Sabbath, or Sunday, is of such importance that the Church views it as a human right and a serious obligation, not a mere privilege, and one that must be permitted by civil authorities and employers. (CCC 2184–2186; CSDC 284–286)

AN APOLOGETICAL EXPLANATION OF
CATHOLICS' BELIEF IN THE BIBLE

How do Catholics regard the Bible?

The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Heb 4:12)

Till I come, attend to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching, to teaching. (1 Tm 4:13)



Catholics hold the Bible to be the inerrant Word of God. "The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord." (DV 21) The teaching authority of the Church interprets Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition to communicate the sacred truths to all generations; this is how Christ "open[s] our minds to understand the Scriptures" (Lk 24:45).

This teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed. (DV 10)

Sacred Scripture tells the story of how God's plan of salvation has unfolded throughout history. "In the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven meets his children with great love and speaks with them" (DV 21). Salvation history, however, is different from other kinds of history. The Bible not only teaches the meaning of past events but also reveals how those events affect every person's life in every age. (Cf. CCC 101–104)

The Bible is inspired and inerrant. God himself guided the Sacred Authors, who were enlightened by God the Holy Spirit to write what he wanted and nothing more, making it "not a written and mute word, but the Word which is incarnate and living" (St. Bernard, *S. Missus Est Hom.*, 4, 11: PL 183, 86). Thus, God the Holy Spirit is the principal author of Scripture; the human writers were the instruments through which he chose to reveal himself to his people. (Cf. CCC 105–108)

The Bible is also literature because it uses literary forms and techniques, such as stories, poems, dialogues, and figurative language to convey its meaning. Insofar as these forms and the historical, political, and cultural contexts in which they lived are not understood, the meaning of the Sacred Authors remains hidden. These literary techniques were placed at the service of the religious purpose of the Bible. (Cf. CCC 109–119)

Sacred Scripture is not intended to be received either as a scientific treatise or as a mere historical record "but as what it really is, the word of God" (1 Thes 2:13; cf. DV 24). It must be read in light of Sacred Tradition and the teachings of the Church in order to be properly understood. This is why Scripture and Tradition form a single Deposit of Faith, which, guided by the Magisterium, which in turn is guided by the Holy Spirit, preserves and communicates Divine Revelation for all time. (Cf. CCC 84–87)

The *Catechism* addresses this question in paragraphs 104 and 108.

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 bottomless pit” (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 33:22). 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, the “bottomless pit” (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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