

Adult Catechism Class February 29, 2016

The Pentateuch- The First Five Books of the Old Testament

Part 1: Scripture Readings:

Genesis 1: 27-31: So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 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.” God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And 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. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

Exodus 20: 1-17: Then God spoke all these words: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore, the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it. Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Leviticus 26: 3-6: If you follow my statutes and keep my commandments and observe them faithfully, I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. Your threshing shall overtake the vintage, and the vintage shall overtake the sowing; you shall eat your bread to the full, and live securely in your land. And I will grant peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and no one shall make you afraid; I will remove dangerous animals from the land, and no sword shall go through your land.

Deuteronomy 6: 4-9: Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Part 2: What is the Pentateuch? The Pentateuch (Greek for “five books”) designates the first five books of the Jewish and Christian Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). Jewish tradition calls the five books Torah (Teaching, Law) because of the centrality of the Sinai covenant and legislation mediated through Moses.

The unity of the Pentateuch comes from the single story it tells. God creates the world and destines human beings for the blessings of progeny and land possession (Gn 1–3). As the human race expands, its evil conduct provokes God to send the flood to wipe out all but righteous Noah’s family. After the flood, the world is repopulated from his three sons, Ham, Shem, and Japheth (Gn 4–9). From them are descended the seventy nations of the civilized world whose offense this time (building a city rather than taking their assigned lands, Gn 10–11) provokes God to elect one family from the rest. Abraham and his wife, Sarah, landless and childless, are promised a child and the land of Canaan. Amid trials and fresh promises, a son (Isaac) is born to them and Abraham takes title to a sliver of Canaanite land, a kind of down payment for later possession (Gn 12–25). Gn 25–36 tells how their descendant Jacob becomes the father of twelve sons (because of which he is called “Israel”), and Gn 37–50 tells how the rejected brother Joseph saves the family from famine and brings them to Egypt.

In Egypt, a pharaoh who knew not Joseph subjects “the seventy sons of Jacob” (“the Hebrews”) to hard labor, keeping them from their land and destroying their male progeny (Ex 1). Moses is commissioned to lead the people out of Egypt to their own land (Ex 2–6). In ten plagues, the Lord defeats Pharaoh. Free at last, the Hebrews leave Egypt and journey to Mount Sinai (Ex 7–18), where they enter into a covenant to be the people of the Lord and be shaped by the Ten Commandments and other laws (Ex 19–24). Though the people commit apostasy when Moses goes back to the mountain for the plans of the dwelling (tabernacle), Moses’ intercession prevents the abrogation of the covenant by God (Ex 32–34). A principle has been established, however: even the people’s apostasy need not end their relationship with God. The book ends with the cloud and the glory taking possession of the tent of meeting (Ex 36:34–38). “The sons of Israel” in Ex 1:1 are the actual sons of Jacob/Israel the patriarch, but at the end of the book they are the nation Israel, for all the elements of nationhood in antiquity have been granted: a god (and temple), a leader, a land, and an authoritative tradition.

Israel remains at the holy mountain for almost a year. The entire block of material from Ex 19:1 to Nm 10:11 is situated at Sinai. The rituals of Leviticus and Numbers are delivered to Moses at the holy mountain, showing that Israel’s worship was instituted by God and part of the very fabric of the people’s life. Priestly material in the Book of Exodus (chaps. 25–31, 35–40) describes the basic institutions of Israelite worship (the tabernacle, its furniture, and priestly vestments). Leviticus, aptly called in rabbinic tradition the Priests’ Manual, lays down the role of priests to teach Israel the distinction between clean and unclean and to see to their holiness. In Nm 10:11–22:1, the journey is resumed, this time from Sinai through the wilderness to Transjordan; Nm 22:2–36:13 tells of events and laws in the plains of Moab. The final book of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy, consists of four speeches by Moses to the people who have arrived at the plains of Moab, ready to conquer the land: 1:1–4:43; 4:44–28:68; 29:1–32:52; 33:1–34:12. Each speech is introduced by the formula “This is the law/words/blessing.”

Part 3: Who wrote the First Five Books of the Bible? Who wrote the Pentateuch, and when? Up to the seventeenth century, the virtually unanimous answer of Jews and Christians was “Moses.” Moses wrote the Pentateuch as David wrote the Psalter and Solomon wrote the wisdom literature. Though scholars had noted inconsistencies (compare Ishmael’s age in Gn 16:16 and 21:5, 14) and duplications (Gn 12, 20, and 26), they assumed Mosaic authorship because of the prevalent theory of inspiration: God inspired authors while they wrote. With the rise of historical criticism, scholars began to use the doublets and inconsistencies as clues to different authors and traditions.

By the late nineteenth century, one theory of the sources of the Pentateuch had been worked out that proved acceptable in its main lines to the majority of scholars (apart from Christian and Jewish conservatives) then and now. It can be quickly sketched. In the premonarchic period of the Judges (ca. 1220–1020 B.C.), the twelve tribes had an oral form of their story from creation to the taking of the land. With the beginnings of monarchy in the late eleventh and tenth centuries, the oral material was written down, being known as the Yahwist account (from its use of the divine name Yhwh). Its abbreviation, “J,” comes from the German spelling of the divine name. In the following century, another account took shape in the Northern Kingdom (called E after its use of Elohim as a divine name); some believe the E source is simply a supplement to J. After the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722/721 B.C., the E version was taken to Jerusalem where it was combined with the J version to produce J-E. During the exile (conventionally dated 587–539 B.C.) or thereafter, an editor recast J-E to make it relevant for the exiled population. This editor is conventionally known as P (= Priestly) because of the chronological and ritual interests apparent in the work. P can also designate archival material and chronological notices. The audience for the Priestly edition no longer lived in the land and was deeply concerned about its survival and its claim on the land.

Deuteronomy (= D) stands alone in style, genre (preaching rather than narrative), and content. How did it come to be the fifth book of the Pentateuch? The J-E narrative actually ends in Numbers, when Israel arrives at the plains of Moab. Many scholars believe that Deuteronomy was secondarily attached to Numbers by moving the account of Moses’ death from its original place in the J-E version in Numbers to the end of Deuteronomy (chap. 34). Deuteronomy was attached to Genesis–Numbers to link it to another great work, the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua to Kings). Deuteronomy is now the fifth book of the Pentateuch and the first book of the Deuteronomistic History.

In the last three decades, the above consensus on the composition of the Pentateuch has come under attack. Some critics are extremely skeptical about the historical value of the so-called early traditions, and a few doubt there ever was a preexilic monarchy of any substance. For such scholars, the Pentateuch is a retrojection from the fourth or third centuries B.C. Other scholars postulate a different sequence of sources, or understand the sources differently.

Part 4: Why Should We Read the Pentateuch? How should a modern religiously minded person read the Pentateuch? First, readers have before them the most significant thing, the text of the Pentateuch. It is accurately preserved, reasonably well understood, and capable of touching audiences of every age. Take and read! Second, the controversies are about the sources of the Pentateuch, especially their antiquity and character. Many details will never be known, for the evidence is scanty. Indeed, the origin of many great literary works is obscure. The Pentateuch witnesses to a coherent story that begins with the creation of the world and ends with Israel taking its land. The same story is in the historical Ps 44, 77, 78, 80, 105, 114, and 149, and in the confessions Dt 26:5–9, Jos 24:2–13, and 1 Sm 12:7–13. Though the narrative enthralls and entertains, as all great literature does, it is well to remember that it is a theopolitical charter as well, meant to establish how and why descendants of the patriarchs are a uniquely holy people among the world’s nations.

The destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and deportation of Israelites in the sixth century B.C. seemed to invalidate the charter, for Israel no longer possessed its land in any real sense. The last chapter of the ancient narrative—Israel dwelling securely in its land—no longer held true. The story had to be reinterpreted, and the Priestly editor is often credited with doing so. A preface (Gn 1) was added, emphasizing God’s intent that human beings continue in existence through their progeny and possess their own land. Good news, surely, to a devastated people wondering whether they would survive and repossess their ancestral land. The ending of the old story was changed to depict Israel at the threshold of the promised land (the plains of Moab) rather than in it. Henceforth, Israel would be a people

oriented toward the land rather than possessing it. The revised ending could not be more suitable for Jews and Christians alike. Both peoples can imagine themselves on the threshold of the promised land, listening to the word of God in order to be able to enter it in the future. For Christians particularly, the Pentateuch portrays the pilgrim people waiting for the full realization of the kingdom of God.

Part 5: 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 *tôledôt*), 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).

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.

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.

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.

Part 6: The Book of Exodus: The second book of the Pentateuch is called Exodus, from the Greek word for "departure," because its central event was understood by the Septuagint's translators to be the departure of the Israelites from Egypt. Its Hebrew title, Shemoth ("Names"), is from the book's opening phrase, "These are the names..." Continuing the history of Israel from the point where the Book of Genesis leaves off, Exodus recounts the Egyptian oppression of Jacob's ever-increasing descendants and their miraculous deliverance by God through Moses, who led them across the Red Sea to Mount Sinai where they entered into a covenant with the Lord. Covenantal laws and detailed prescriptions for the tabernacle (a portable sanctuary foreshadowing the Jerusalem Temple) and its service are followed by a dramatic episode of rebellion, repentance, and divine mercy. After the broken covenant is renewed, the tabernacle is constructed, and the cloud signifying God's glorious presence descends to cover it.

These events made Israel a nation and confirmed their unique relationship with God. The "law" (Hebrew torah) given by God through Moses to the Israelites at Mount Sinai constitutes the moral, civil, and ritual legislation by which they were to become a holy people. Many elements of it were fundamental to the teaching of Jesus (Mt 5:21–30; 15:4) as well as to New Testament and Christian moral teaching (Rom 13:8–10; 1 Cor 10:1–5; 1 Pt 2:9).

In Exodus, God gives Moses the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are a summary of "the conditions of a life freed from the slavery of sin" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2057). They must be understood in relation to the "law of love": Love of God and love of neighbor summarize all of Catholic morality. The law of love is also the first principle & source of the moral law. It contains "all the law and the prophets" (Mt 22:40). The Ten Commandments are a description of the minimum that love requires. Christian life itself requires much more than simply following the Ten Commandments. Again, the Ten Commandments are a description of the basic freedom from sin that is necessary to live as a Christian. They are a minimum level of living, below which we must not go. The Ten Commandments and Catholicism have been bound together since the time of Christ. In fact, Jesus refers to the Ten Commandments and assures their validity in his dialog with the rich young man in Matthew's Gospel (Mt 19:16–21). The Catechism refers to this in item #2052. It's important to note that each Commandment is simply a summary of a whole category of actions. Don't be legalistic, searching for a way around them because their wording doesn't fit you perfectly! For example, "bearing false witness against your neighbor" covers any kind of falsehood: perjury, lying, slander, detraction, rash judgment, etc. The Catholic Ten Commandments are linked together to form a coherent whole. If you break one of them, you're guilty of breaking all of them (Catechism, #2069). The Commandments express man's

fundamental duties to God and neighbor. As such, they represent grave obligations. To violate them knowingly & willingly in a significant way is to commit mortal sin.

The Ten Commandments are often cited as examples of the natural law. Christians are obliged to follow the laws cited in the Ten Commandments not because they are cited in the Ten Commandments—part of Old Testament law—but because they are part of the natural law—for the most part. Certainly we can know by reason alone that certain actions are immoral—e.g., to kill the innocent, to take what does not belong to us, to cheat on our spouses, etc. Similarly, we can know by reason alone that we are obliged to worship our Creator. But can we really know in the same way that such worship should take place on Saturday every week? Of course not! That part of the Sabbath commandment is not part of the natural law at all but was simply a law imposed upon the Jews for the discipline of their nation. Other people had the authority to choose for themselves the time they set aside for worship. For Christians now, it makes sense to do this on Sunday.

Part 7: The Book of Leviticus: The name “Leviticus” was given to the third book of the Pentateuch by the ancient Greek translators because a good part of this book deals with concerns of the priests, who are of the tribe of Levi. The book mainly treats cultic matters (i.e., sacrifices and offerings, purity and holiness, the priesthood, the operation of the sanctuary, and feast days) but is also interested in various behavioral, ethical, and economic issues (e.g., sexual practices, idolatrous worship, treatment of others, the sale of land, slavery). The goal of the laws is not merely legislative. For the most part they cohere as a system and attempt to inculcate a way of life in the book’s hearers and readers. In addition to these concerns, Leviticus, comprising as it does the center of the Pentateuch, carries forward the narrative of Exodus (cf. chaps. 1, 8–9, 10, 16, 24).

The book is part of the Priestly tradition (P) of the Pentateuch, to which belong various narratives and legal passages (e.g., Gn 1:1–2:4; 9:1–17; 17:1–27; Ex 12:1–20, 40–50; 25:1–31:18; 35:1–40:38; Nm 1:1–10:28; 15:1–14; 17:1–19:22; 25:6–31:54). Within the Priestly material itself there are signs of variant traditions and development.

Old Testament law, as such, is not binding on Christians. It never has been. In fact, it was only ever binding on those to whom it was delivered—the Jews (Israelites). That said, some of that law contains elements of a law that is binding on all people of every place and time. Jesus and Paul provide evidence of this in the New Testament. Paul recognized that much of the Old Testament law was instituted to set the stage for the new law that Christ would usher in. Much of the old law’s value could be viewed in this regard. Clearly, Jesus indicated that he—not the Old Testament—had authority over the Sabbath, and its regulation was not as rigid as the Pharisees thought. In fact, once Jesus would endow the hierarchy of his Church with his own authority (Matt. 16:19; 18:18), regulation of worship would become the domain of the Church. Old Testament law required, as a discipline, that the Jews worship on Saturday. Similarly, the Church obliges Catholics to worship on Sunday, the day of the Lord’s Resurrection. Old Testament law contains elements of natural law—e.g., the condemnation of homosexual activity—to which Christians are bound for that reason, not because of their inclusion in the Old Testament. Christians do not have liberty on these issues. Also, Christians are not and have never been bound by Old Testament law for its own sake, and those elements of Old Testament

law which are not part of the natural law—e.g., the obligation to worship on Saturday —were only ever binding on the Jews. Christians do have liberty on those issues.

Part 8: The Book of Numbers: The Book of Numbers derives its name from the account of the two censuses taken of the Hebrew people, one near the beginning and the other toward the end of the journey in the wilderness (chaps. 1 and 26). It continues the story of that journey begun in Exodus, and describes briefly the experiences of the Israelites for a period of thirty-eight years, from the end of their encampment at Sinai to their arrival at the border of the promised land. Numerous legal ordinances are interspersed in the account, making the book a combination of law and history.

The book divides neatly into two parts. Each part begins with a census of the people (chaps. 1 and 26) and inaugurates a period of preparation prior to entering the promised land. In the first case these preparations come to a tragic end when scouts are sent forth to survey the promised land (chaps. 13–14). Upon their return, the people are so disheartened by the description of the native inhabitants and the seemingly impossible task that lies in front of them that they refuse to enter the land. This results in a decision to doom that entire generation to death and to allow another generation the chance to enter. After the death of the first generation, then, a second census is taken (chap. 26) and again preparations are made to enter the land. In this case, however, the birth of a new generation suggests these preparations will not be in vain. The book ends with the Israelites across the Jordan outside the land of Canaan, underscoring a chief theme of the Pentateuch as a whole: the people anticipating the fulfillment of God’s promise of the land.

Part 9: The Book of Deuteronomy: The title of Deuteronomy in Hebrew is Debarim, “words,” from its opening phrase. The English title comes from the Septuagint of 17:18, deuteronomion, “copy of the law”; this title is appropriate because the book replicates much of the legal content of the previous books, serving as a “second law.” It brings to a close the five books of the Torah or Pentateuch with a retrospective account of Israel’s past—the exodus, the Sinai covenant, and the wilderness wanderings—and a look into Israel’s future as they stand poised to enter the land of Canaan and begin their life as a people there.

The book consists of three long addresses by Moses. Each of these contains narrative, law, and exhortation, in varying proportions. In an expansion of the first commandment of the decalogue (Ex 20:5–6; Dt 5:9–10), Moses tells the Israelites how to make a success of their life as a people once they are settled in the land. The choice presented to Israel is to love the Lord and keep his commandments, or to serve “other gods.” That choice will determine what kind of life they will make for themselves in the land. Whichever choice they make as a people carries consequences, which Deuteronomy terms “blessing” and “curse.” Thus the book can be seen as a kind of survival manual for Israel in their life as a people: how to live and what to avoid. This gives the book its hortatory style and tone of life-or-death urgency.

One defining concern of the book is centralization of worship. As Israel’s God is one (6:4–5), so its worship must be focused in one place, which the Lord “will choose from among your tribes”; there the Lord will “make his name dwell” (see note on 12:5). Thus the privileged status of the Jerusalem Temple is asserted; all other places and all other modes of worship of the God of

Israel (the local shrines, the “high places,” “under every green tree”) are proscribed. The book was probably composed over the course of three centuries, from the eighth century to the exile and beyond. It bears some relation to “the Book of the Law” discovered in the Jerusalem Temple around 622 B.C. during the reign of King Josiah (2 Kgs 22:8–13). It gives evidence of later editing: cf. the references to exile in 4:1–40; 28:63–68; 29:21–28; 30:1–10. Over the book looms the disaster of 722/721, the fall of the Northern Kingdom, Israel. The detailed description of siege (28:49–57) especially echoes the fate the North suffered at the hands of the Assyrian invader. The book draws the minds of its intended readers back to a time before disastrous mistakes were made and their disastrous effects felt, and serves to explain the political and theological dynamics that led to the destruction of the North as well as to warn the surviving Southern Kingdom, Judah, to reform by keeping faith with Israel’s covenant Lord. The characteristic and highly recognizable language and theology of Deuteronomy are seen in editorial comments structuring the works that follow it in the Hebrew canon, the Books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. Together with Deuteronomy, these present a history of Israel from Moses to the time of the Babylonian exile. Conventionally this great multivolume work is termed the Deuteronomistic History. The Book of Deuteronomy itself was also incorporated into the Torah as its fifth volume.

The human authors of the Old Testament told us as much as they were able, but they could not clearly discern the shape of all future events standing at such a distance. It is the Bible’s divine Author, the Holy Spirit, who could and did foretell the saving work of Christ, from the first page of the Book of Genesis onward.

The New Testament did not, therefore, abolish the Old. Rather, the New fulfilled the Old, and in doing so, it lifted the veil that kept hidden the face of the Lord’s bride. Once the veil is removed, we suddenly see the world of the Old Covenant charged with grandeur. Water, fire, clouds, gardens, trees, hills, doves, lambs—all of these things are memorable details in the history and poetry of Israel. But now, seen in the light of Jesus Christ, they are much more. For the Christian with eyes to see, water symbolizes the saving power of Baptism; fire, the Holy Spirit; the spotless lamb, Christ crucified; Jerusalem, the city of heavenly glory.