

The background features abstract, overlapping green geometric shapes, primarily triangles and polygons, in various shades of green, creating a modern and dynamic visual effect.

Turning Points of the Reformation

How the Bible turned the world upside-down.

Mysticism & the Presence of God

“ One Pentecost at dawn, I had a vision. Matins were being sung in the church and I was there...
I desired to consummate my lover completely and to confess and to savor to the fullest extent—to fulfill his humanity blissfully with mine and to experience mine therein, and to be strong and perfect so that I in turn would satisfy him perfectly: to be purely and exclusively and completely virtuous in every virtue. And to that end I wished, inside me, that he would satisfy me with his Godhead in one spirit (as it says in 1 Corinthians 6)... ”

Hadewijch of Antwerp, *Vision VII* (date unknown, prob. 13th Century CE).

How did we get here?

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17

This presents a problem for the early church.

How do we read the Scriptures?

- ▶ Luke 15:11-32 (The prodigal son)
- ▶ The Exodus story



*The Return of the Prodigal Son,
by Pompeo Batoni.*

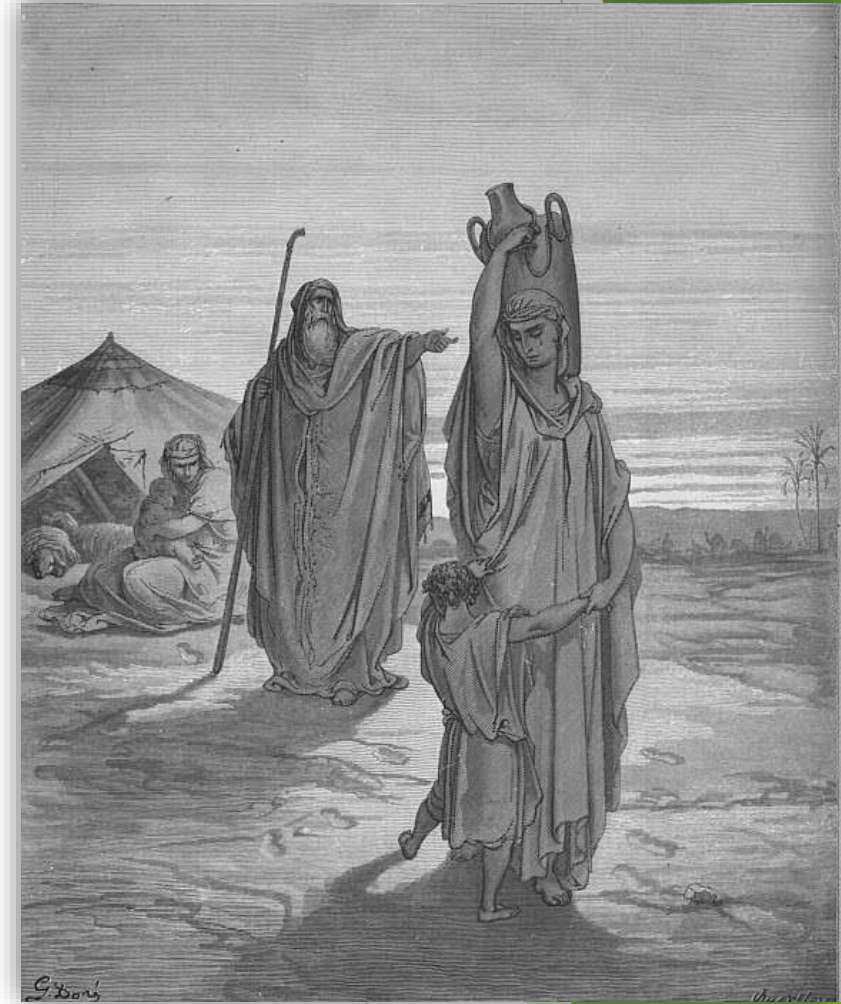
“For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.”

1 Corinthians 10:1-6

How do we read the Old Testament?

How do we read the Scriptures?

- ▶ Luke 15:11-32 (The prodigal son)
- ▶ The Exodus story
- ▶ The Abraham Story



“ ... it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.”

Galatians 4:22-26

Is this only in the genre of “history?”

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”

Matthew 5:17-18

How do we read the Old Testament?

How do we read *these* Scriptures?

- ▶ Luke 15:11-32 (The prodigal son)
- ▶ The Exodus story
- ▶ The Abraham Story
- ▶ Song of Songs



“Your neck is like the tower of David, built in rows of stone; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors. Your two breasts are like two fawns, twins of a gazelle, graze among the lilies. Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, I will go away to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense.”

Song of Songs 4:4-6

This is in the Bible?

How do we read this?

How do we read *these* Scriptures?

- ▶ Luke 15:11-32 (The prodigal son)
- ▶ The Exodus story
- ▶ The Abraham Story
- ▶ Song of Songs
- ▶ Revelation

“From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight.”

Revelation 4:5-7

Is this even important? Can't we just skip it?

“Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.”

-Revelation 1:3



“My advice to you... is to leave behind everything perceived and understood... with you understanding laid aside, to strive upward as much as you can toward union with him who is beyond all being and knowledge.”

Dionysius the Areopagite (1st Century CE)

“...Paul went out from their midst. But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.”

-Acts 17:33-34

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Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (prob. 5th-6th Century CE...)

This “Pseudo-Dionysius” wrote many influential works.

His influence may be illegitimate, but it was still influential!

His key insights: God is beyond all our names for him.

Only negative theology is really true.



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“Just as a man consists of body, soul, and spirit, so in the same way does the scripture, which has been prepared by God to be given for man’s salvation.”

Origen, (c. 184-254 CE)

Origen is an extremely influential figure in early Christianity.

Origen proposes multiple senses of scripture.

Particularly notable is Origen’s commentary on the *Song of Songs*.



“If anyone anywhere has at some time
burned with this faithful love of the Word
of God... if anyone has been pierced the
love-worthy spear of his knowledge, so
that he yearns and longs for him by day
and night... that soul then says in truth: “I
have been wounded by charity.”

Origen, (c. 184-254 CE)

The *Song of Songs* was typically read as an allegory for Christ and the Church.
Origen reads the *Song* as an allegory for ***Christ and the individual Christian.***

Bernhard of Clairvaux (1090-1153 CE)

- ▶ Bernard continues Origen's lead by describing the lover in the *Song* as the individual Christian.
- ▶ Hierarchy
- ▶ ***Experience verifies the mystical:***
“In matters of this kind, understanding can follow only where experience leads.”



Contemplation

- ▶ What do you think of when you hear the word, “contemplation?”
- ▶ *The attempt of the mind to purify itself and attain union with its supernatural source.*
- ▶ Christian contemplation has its origin in Plato.



Carthusian Monks

- ▶ Throughout medieval history, Carthusian monks are renowned for their contemplative devotion.
- ▶ They leave behind almost no books.



*Bruno of Cologne,
revering Mary and Jesus.
Painting by Sebastiano Ricci.*

Anchorites

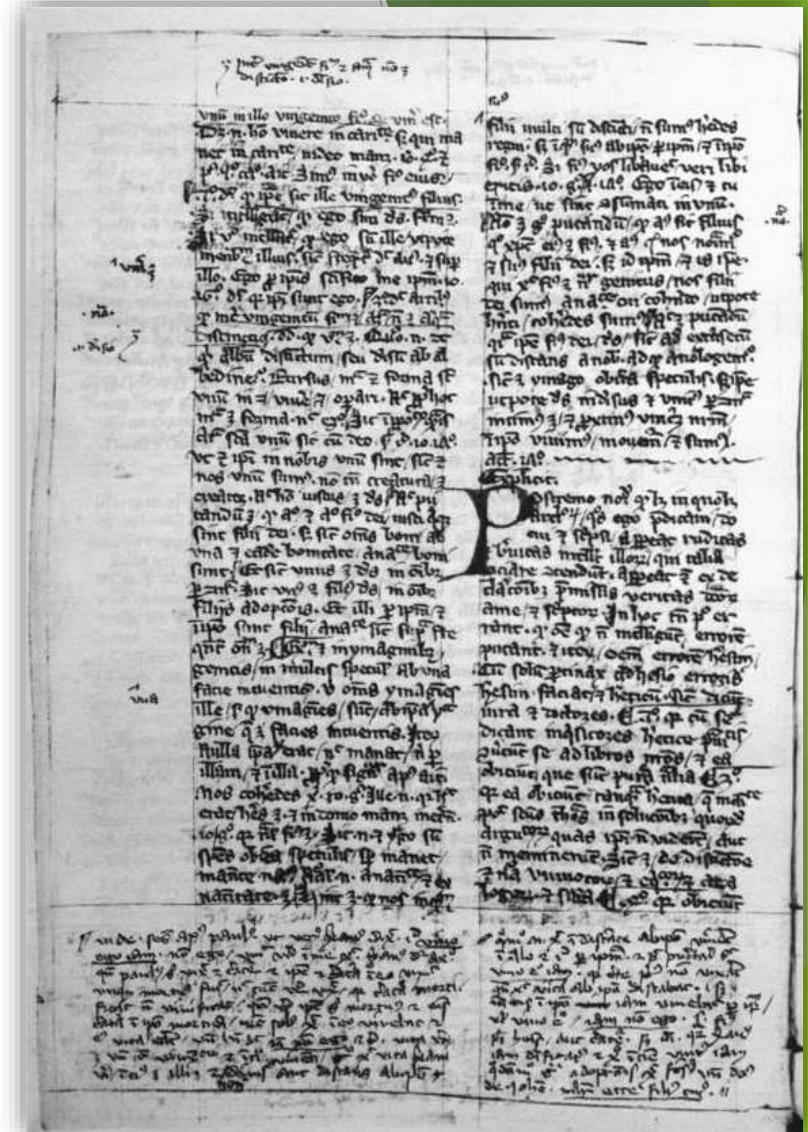
- ▶ Men and women who are enclosed into a cell, typically with at least one wall adjoining a church.
- ▶ Anchorites remain alive through the donations of people who bring them everything they need to survive.
- ▶ They spent their lives in *contemplation and intercession*.



An anchorite's cell in England.

Meister Eckhart (c. 1260-1328 CE)

- Mary & Martha Passive / Active Life
- Turn inward
- *Spark and Ground of the soul*



A manuscript copy of one of Eckhart's works

“All our perfection and our holiness rests in this: that a person must penetrate and transcend everything created and temporal and all being and go into the ground that has no ground. We pray our dear Lord God that we may become one and indwelling, and may God help us into the same ground, Amen.”

Meister Eckhart, *German Sermon 42*.

Entering into the “ground.”

“The first grace consists in a type of flowing out, a departure from God; the second consists in a type of flowing back, a return to God himself.”

Meister Eckhart, *Latin Sermon 25*.

Flow: with God as the source.

Mysticism is a kind of
desperation for God.

Johannes Tauler (c. 1300-1361 CE)

- ▶ Tauler is much like many of his contemporaries.
- ▶ Turn inward to see God.
- ▶ Clear yourself of sin, & free yourself of worldly attachments.
- ▶ Great emphasis on the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist as the appropriate place for the immediate encounter with God.



*Statue of Tauler, outside
Saint-Pierre-le-Jeune
Protestant Church*

Seeking the Presence of God

The Sacraments

What is a sacrament?

Physical Element Combined with the Word of God

Sacraments

- ▶ Baptism
- ▶ Communion
- ▶ Confession & Penance
- ▶ Confirmation
- ▶ Marriage
- ▶ Ordination
- ▶ Anointing the Sick

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The Large Catechism: Baptism

- ▶ “Baptism remains forever. Even though someone falls from it and sins, we always have access to it so that we may again subdue the old creature. But we need not have the water poured over us again.”
- ▶ “As Christ, the mercy seat, does not withdraw from us or forbid us to return to him even though we sin, so all his treasures and gifts remain.”

The Large Catechism:

The Sacrament of the Altar

- ▶ “Even though a scoundrel receives or administers the sacrament, it is the true sacrament...”
- ▶ “Christ does not say, ‘If you believe or if you are worthy, you have my body and blood,’ but rather, ‘Take, eat and drink, this is my body and blood.’”
- ▶ “For we are not baptized because we are worthy and holy, nor do we come to confession as if we were pure and without sin; on the contrary, we come as poor miserable people, precisely because we are unworthy.”

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