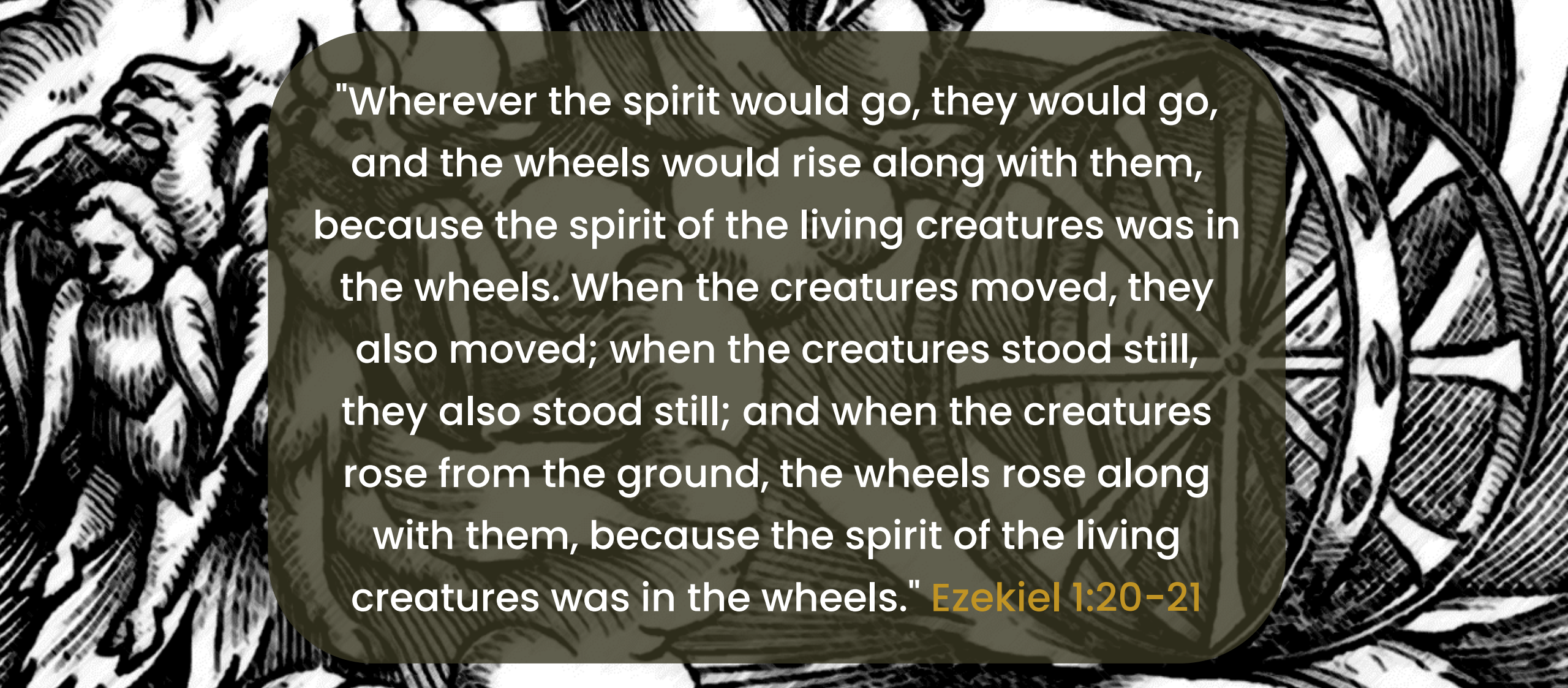


'Wheels within wheels' –
God Gyroscope –
Understanding the Spiritual
Sense of Scripture from the
Fathers of the Church
Fr Marcus Holden, Episcopal Vicar for
Evangelisation and Catechesis



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2023 Diocesan Day for Catechists

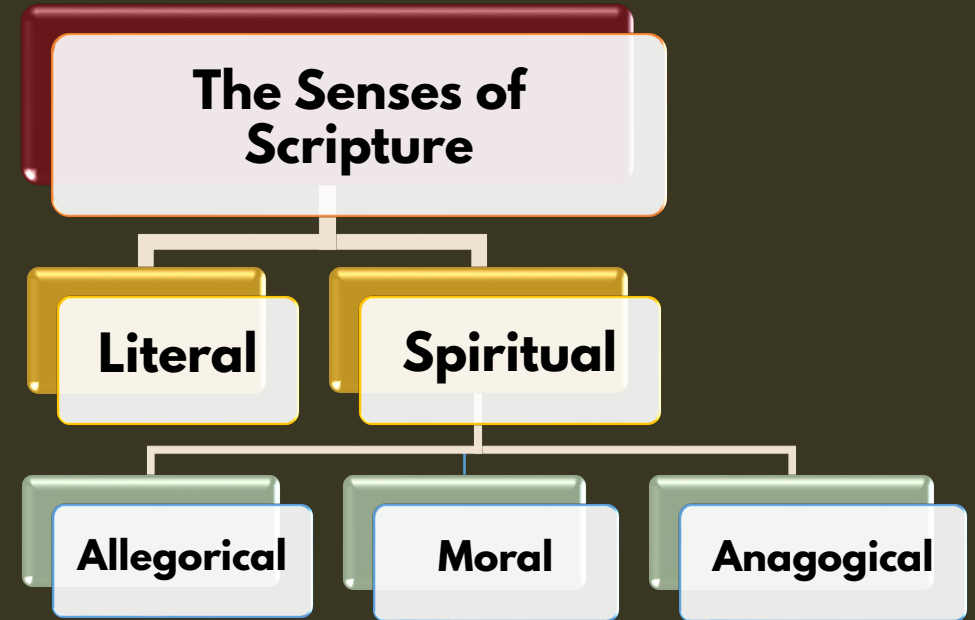


"Wherever the spirit would go, they would go, and the wheels would rise along with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. When the creatures moved, they also moved; when the creatures stood still, they also stood still; and when the creatures rose from the ground, the wheels rose along with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels." **Ezekiel 1:20-21**

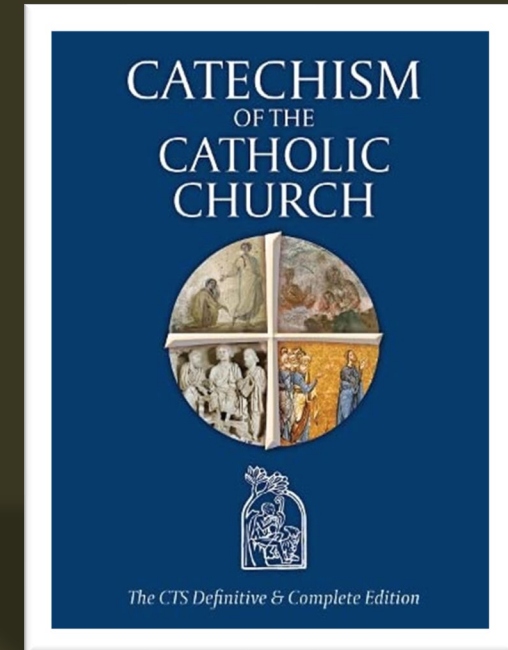


The Senses of Scripture

CCC 115 According to an ancient tradition, one can distinguish between two senses of Scripture: the literal and the spiritual, the latter being subdivided into the allegorical, moral, and anagogical senses. The profound concordance of the four senses guarantees all its richness to the living reading of Scripture in the Church.



CCC 119 "It is the task of exegetes to work, according to these rules, toward a better understanding and explanation of the meaning of to form a firmer judgment. For, of course, all that has been said about the manner of interpreting Scripture is ultimately subject to the judgment of the Church which exercises the divinely conferred commission and ministry of watching over and interpreting the Word of God." (Dei Verbum 12)



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The Catechism of the Catholic Church



Jesus on the road to Emmaus shows how all the Scriptures refer to himself.

“Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”

Luke 24:27



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From Our Lord Himself

John 3

The crossing of the Red Sea foreshadows baptism.

John 5:39–40

'You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me'.



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From Our Lord Himself

John 6:26–58

Jesus sees the manna
as a pre-figurement of
the Eucharist.

*"I am the bread that
came down from
heaven."* John 6:41



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From Our Lord Himself



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“It was for Christ, as St Paul saw clearly, to take his place in the tradition prepared for him – and thereby shatter that tradition to fragments. All had to be reinterpreted in light of him”.

Jean Guitton





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St Paul is truly the
exegete par excellence.



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Galatians 4:21–31

Sarah and Hagar refer to the two dispensations/covenants: Christian and Jewish

Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, 45–49

St Paul explains that the first Adam is a type of Christ, the second Adam



1 Corinthians 10:1–11

The events of Exodus refer to baptism and the Eucharist

Colossians 2:17

'These are but a shadow of things to come'



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Paul's use of Scripture

Hebrews 7:19

'For the Law brought nothing to perfection, and on the other hand a bringing in of a better hope through which we draw near to God.'

Hebrews 10:1

The law was only a shadow of the true things to come. The mysteries lie under symbolic veils.

+ many other references and allusions

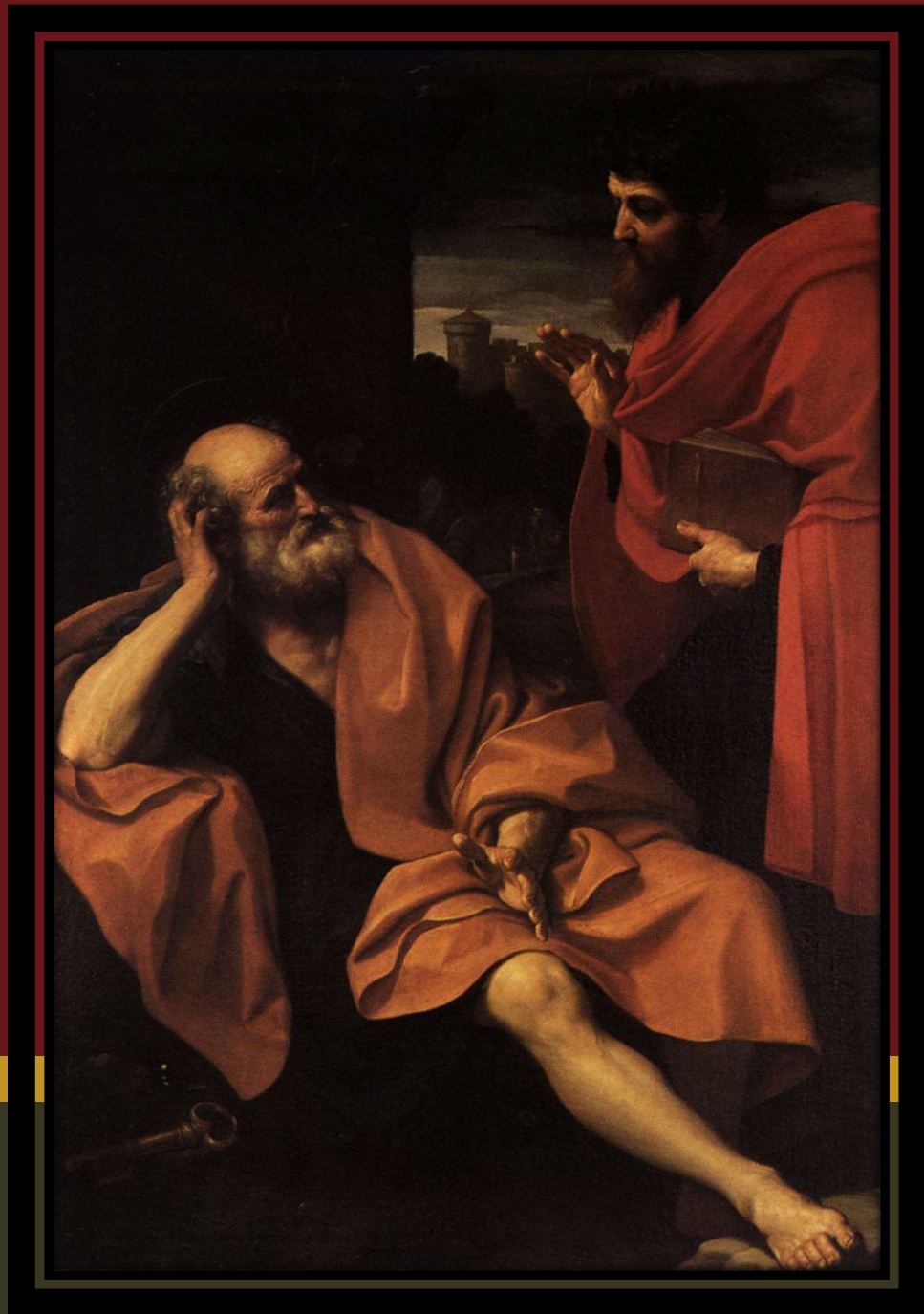


“For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also” (Romans 3:28–29)

“I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”

Galatians 2:21





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Then what advantage has the Jew?...Much, in every way. For in the first place the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.

Romans 3:2



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Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.

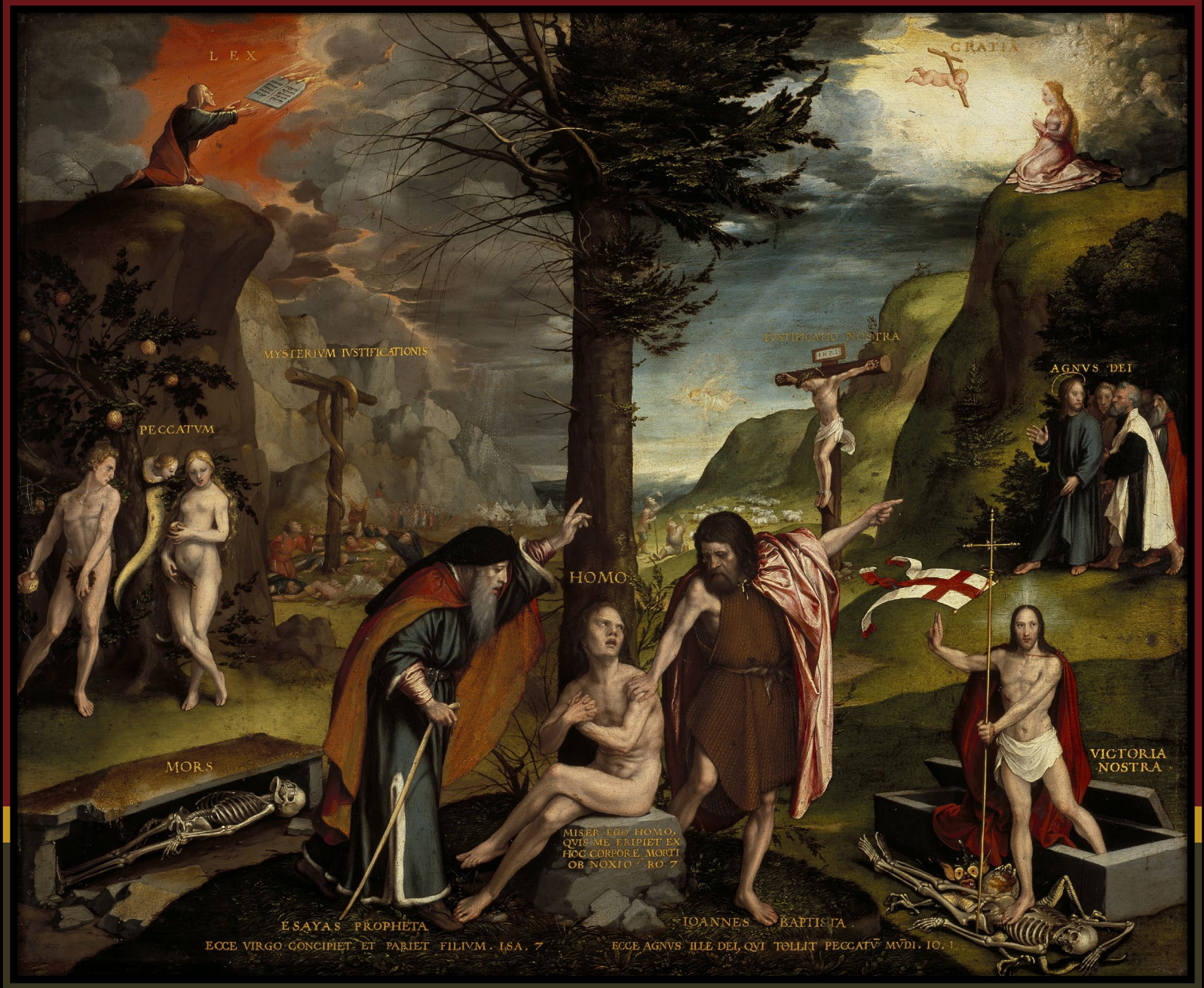
2 Timothy 3:15-17



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"The New is in the Old contained,
The Old is in the New retained;
The New is in the Old concealed.
The Old is in the New revealed;
The New is in the Old enfolded,
The Old is in the New unfolded".





LEX

GRATIA

MYSTERIVM IUSTIFICATIONIS

PECCATVM

IUSTIFICATIO NOSTRA

AGNVS DEI

HOMO

MORS

VICTORIA NOSTRA

ESAYAS PROPHETA

IOANNES BAPTISTA

ECCE VIRGO CONCIPET ET PARIET FILIVM. ISA. 7.

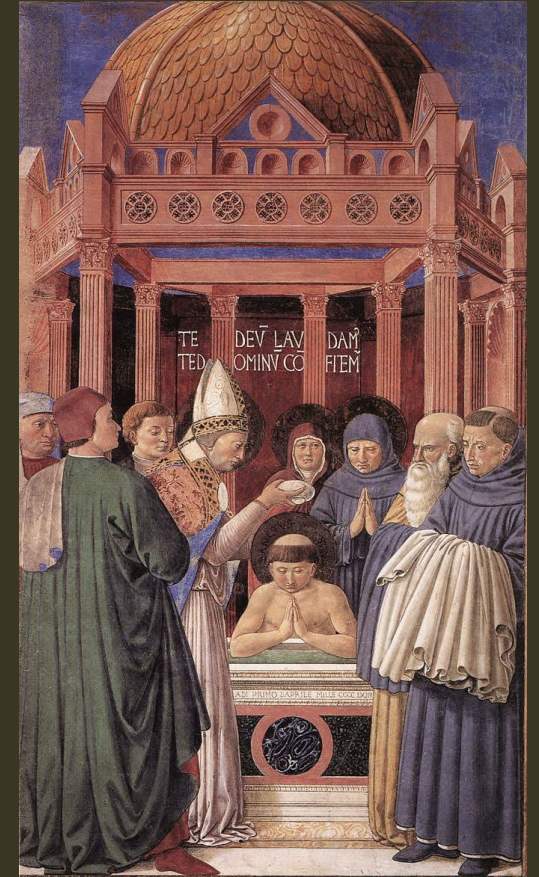
ECCE AGNVS ILLÉ DEI, QUI TOLLIT PECCATV' MVDI. IO. 1.

MISER EGO HOMO,
QVIS ME ERUPIET EX
HCC CORPORE, MORTI
OB NOXIO. 7. RO. 7



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The unfolding of Tradition



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The great Tradition of Exegesis

'There are four senses of Sacred Scripture. History, which narrates things done; Allegory, in which one thing is understood from another; Tropology (that is, moral discourse), in which the ordering of habits is treated; and Anagogy, by which we are lead upward to treat of highest and heavenly things' -
Commentary on Genesis



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The great Tradition of Exegesis



'Now this spiritual sense is divided into three. For, as St. Paul says, The Old Law is the figure of the New Law, and the New Law itself, as Dionysius says, is the figure of the glory to come. Then again, under the New Law the deeds wrought by our Head are signs also of what we ourselves ought to do' – Summa I, 1, 10





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The Consensus of the Doctors





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The Consensus of the Doctors



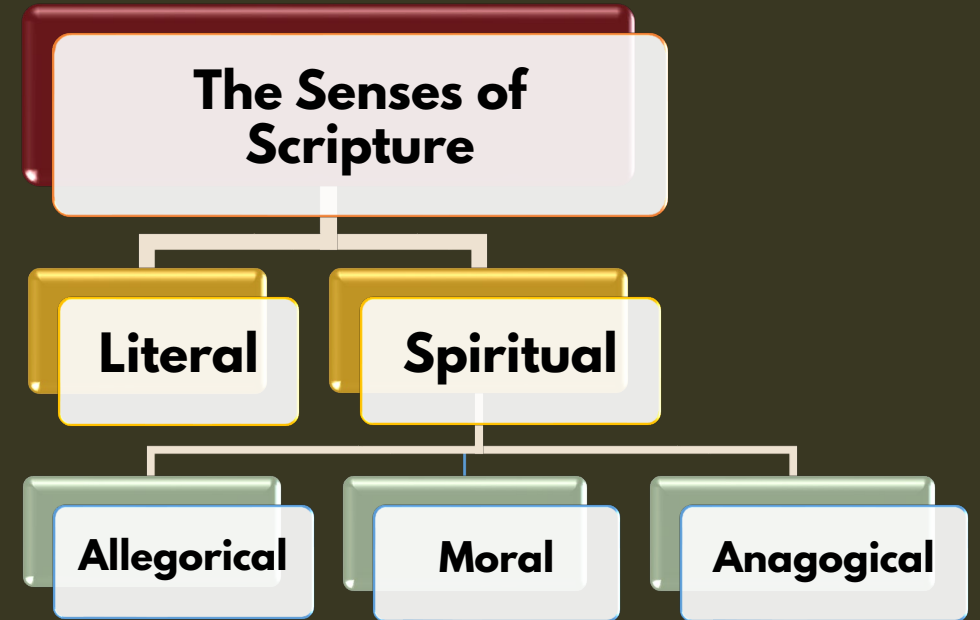
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Understanding the Senses





Joseph Ratzinger describes the spiritual method as looking at the texts, “in the light of the total movement of history and in light of history’s central event, Jesus Christ”.

Ratzinger, J. *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: The Ratzinger Conference on the Bible and the Church*, ed. Neuhaus, R, J. Eerdmans 1989, p20



‘As a plan for the fullness of time,
to unite all things in Him’

Jesus Christ and his saving
death and resurrection are at
the centre of Salvation History



The Spiritual Sense refers the further/secondary significance of those things (persons, events, places etc...) referred to by the letter of scripture.

God has ordered the things described by the inspired words of Scripture, so that these things can, in their turn, signify other important eternal and invisible things: Christ and the Church (Allegory); the life of grace for the Christian (Moral); the glory that is to come (Anagogical).



'The author of Sacred Scripture is God, in whose power it is to signify His meaning, not by words only (as man also can do), but also by things in themselves'

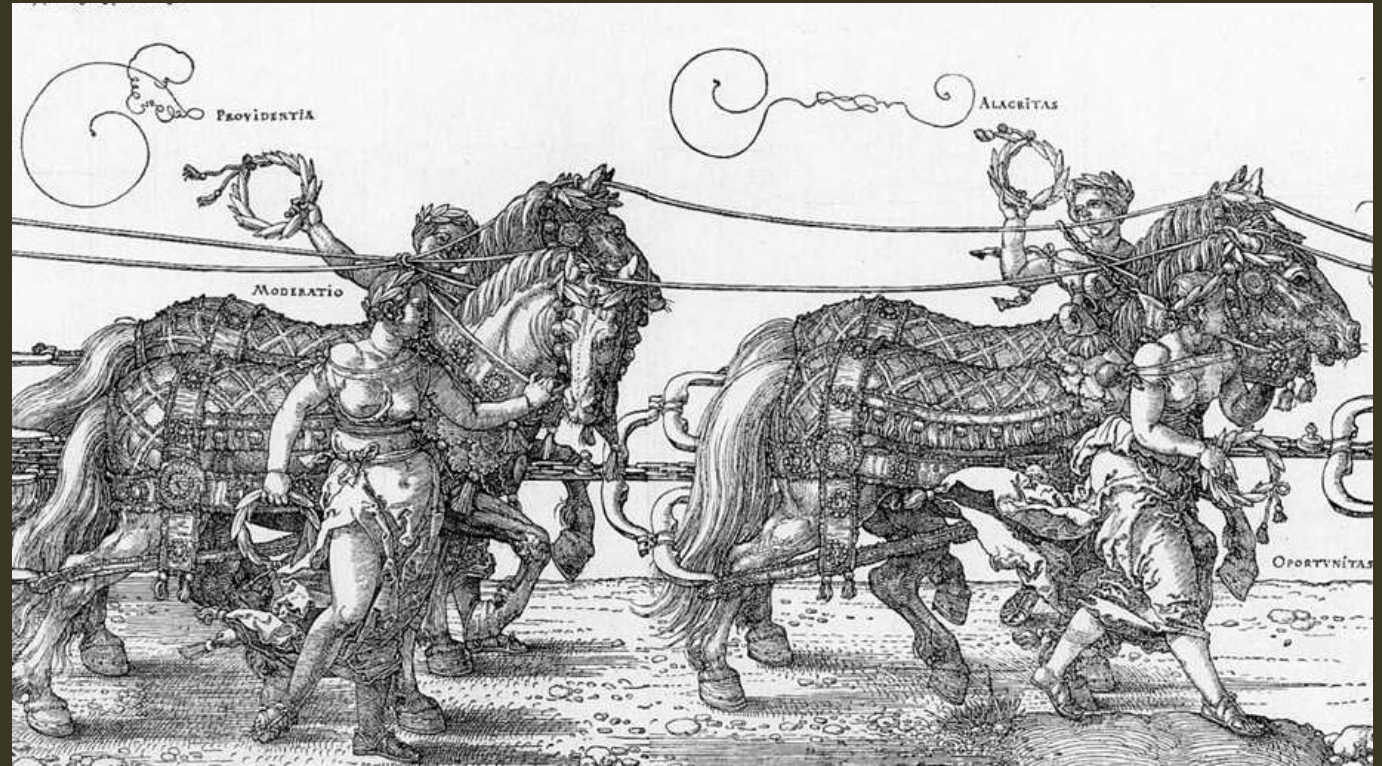
St Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, I, 1, 10



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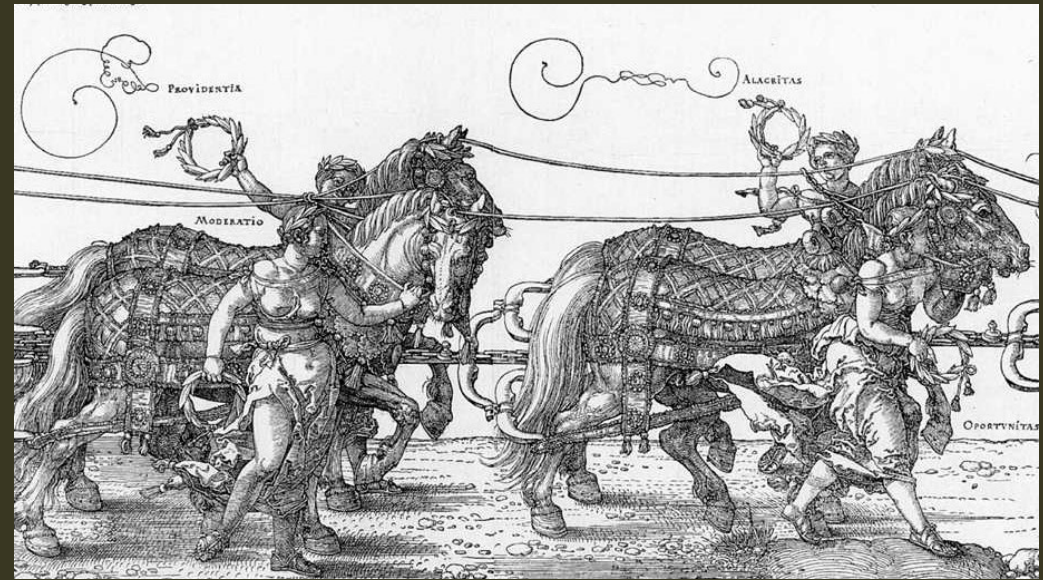
What is the Spiritual Sense?

'Quadrigena' is the name given to 'four senses of Scripture' used by the great Fathers and Doctors of the Church in the interpretation of Sacred Scripture.



A medieval couplet summarises the significance of the four senses: Lettera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria, moralis quid agas, quo tendas anagogia

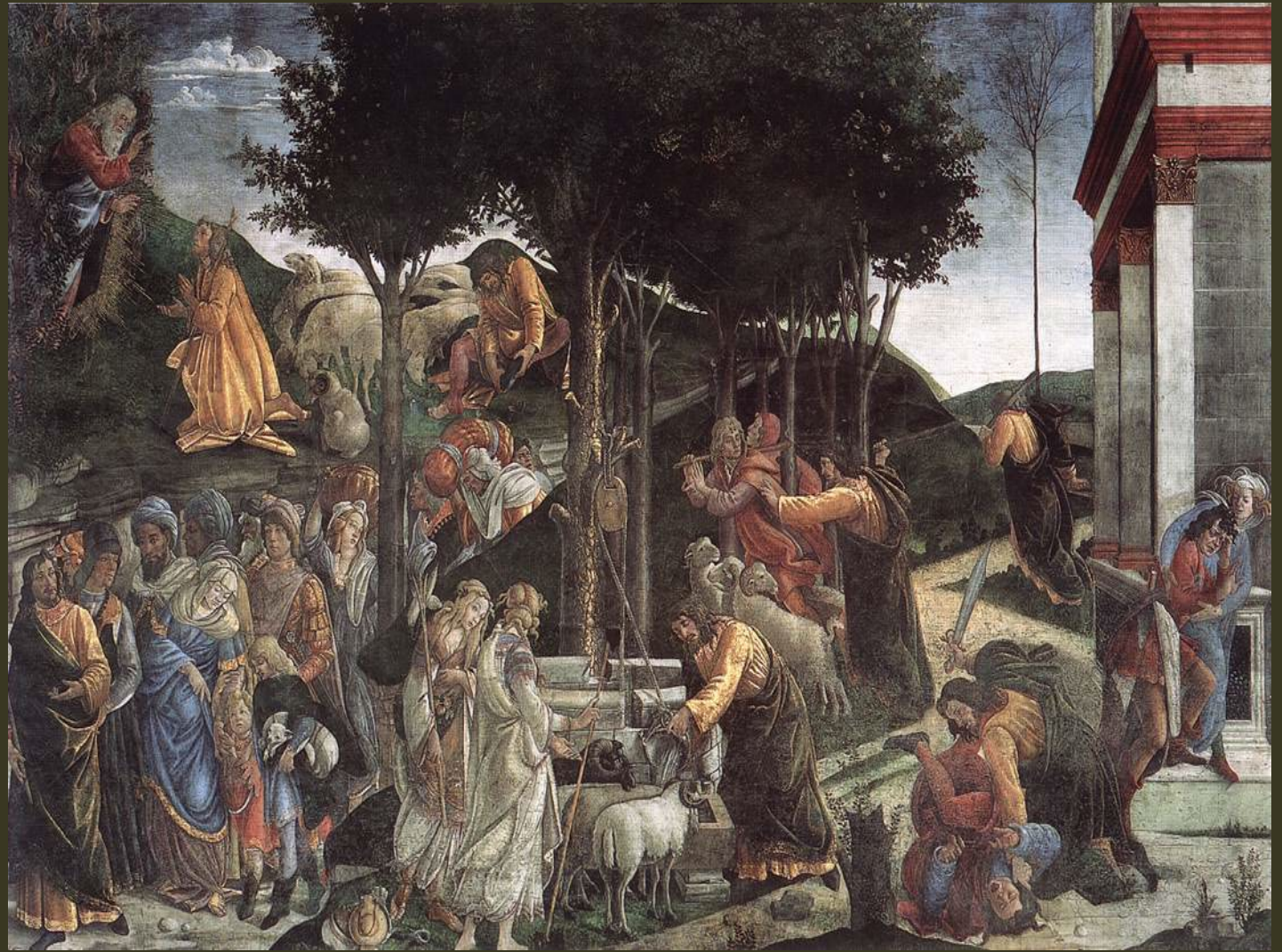
*The Letter speaks of deeds,
Allegory to faith,
The Moral how to act,
Anagogy our destiny*



The ALLEGORICAL SENSE is the spiritual sense by which something described in Scripture, especially in the Old Testament, is also linked, by God, to Christ or to the Church. Example: A reference to Jerusalem in the Old Testament can also refer allegorically to Christ's body, the Church.



'For, as St. Paul says,
The Old Law is the
figure of the New Law'
St Thomas Aquinas



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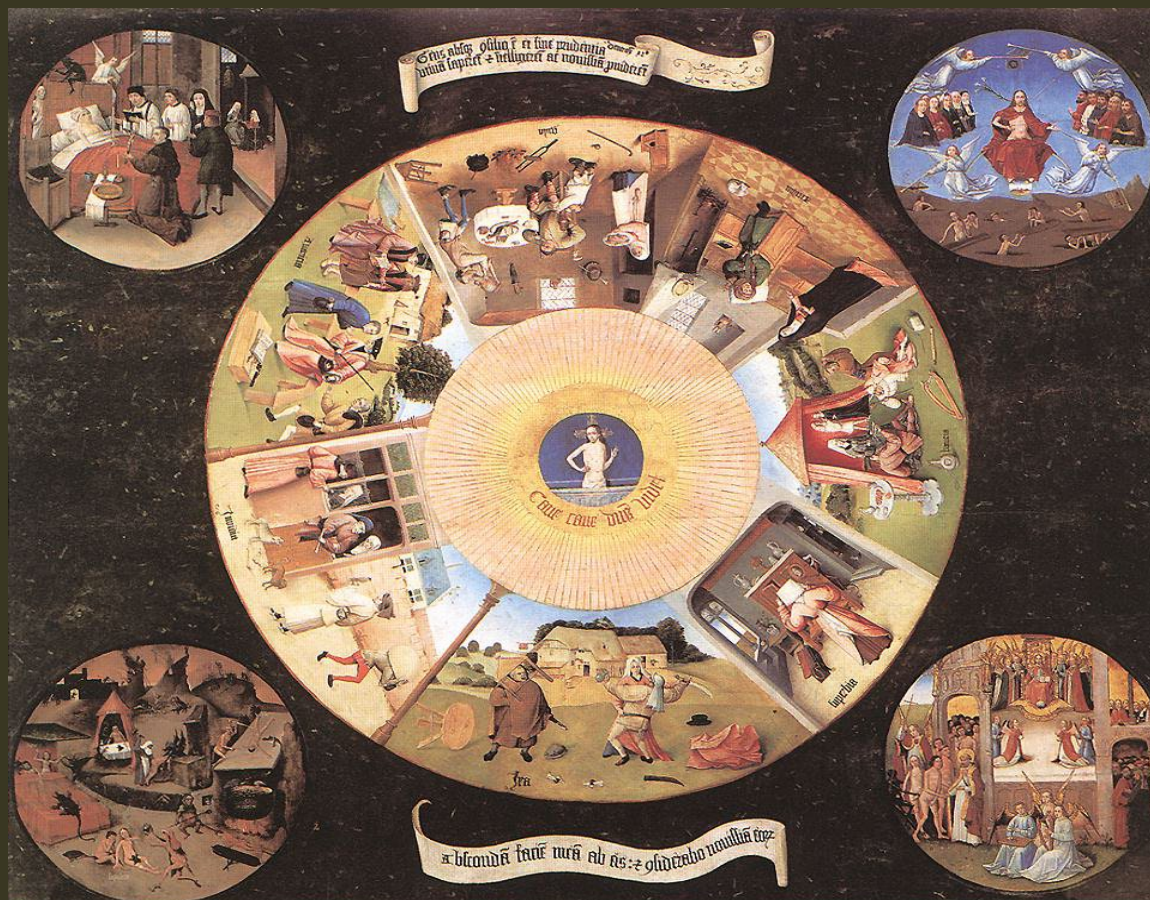
What is the *Quadrigena*?



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Common Allegorical Types

The MORAL sense is the spiritual sense by which something in Scripture described is also linked, by God, to the living of the Christian life



Example: A reference to Jerusalem can also refer morally to the human soul, the place where the Lord dwells

‘Then again, under the New Law the deeds wrought by our Head are signs also of what we ourselves ought to do’



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Moral Sense

ANAGOGICAL is the spiritual sense by which something described in Scripture is also linked, by God, to Heavenly glory. Example: A reference to the Resurrection can also refer anagogically to what we can be in heaven.



‘The New Law itself, as Dionysius says, is the figure of the glory to come’ –
St Thomas Aquinas



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Anagogical Sense

By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion.

On the willows there we hung up our lyres.

For there our captors required of us songs, and our tormentors, mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"

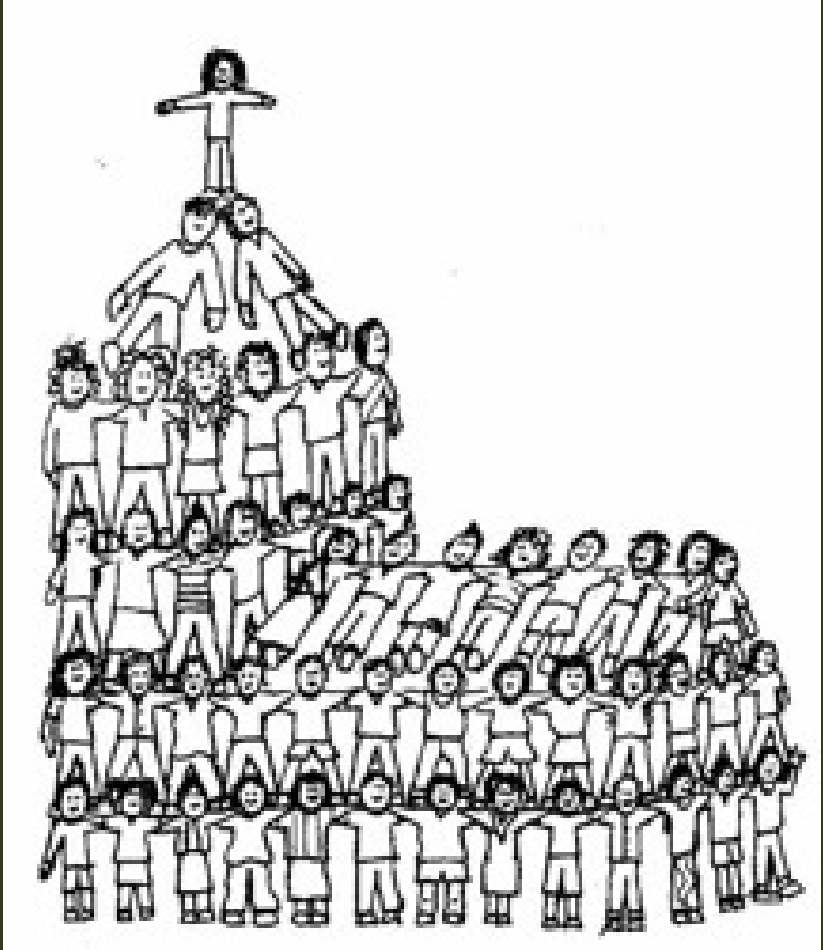
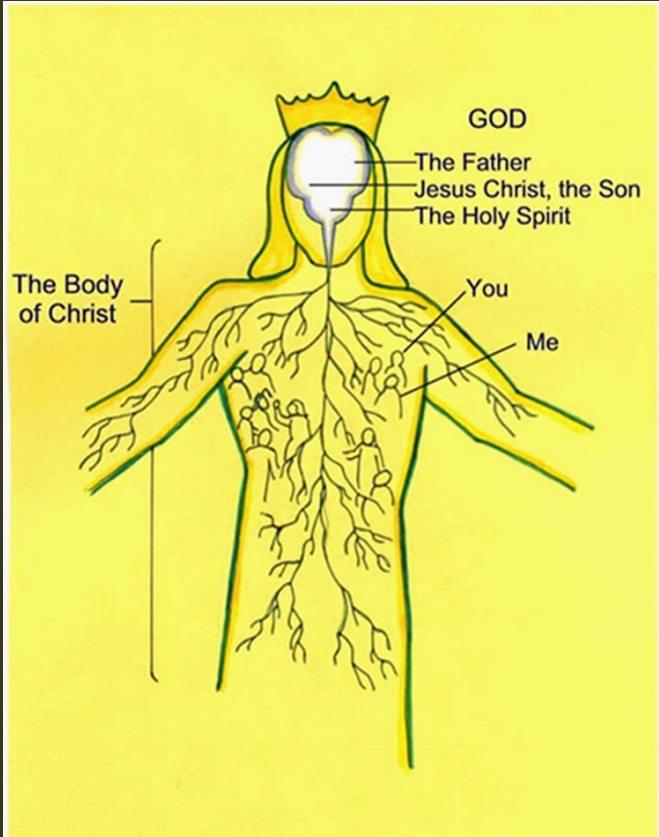
How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?

If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill!

Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest

joy! **Psalm 137**







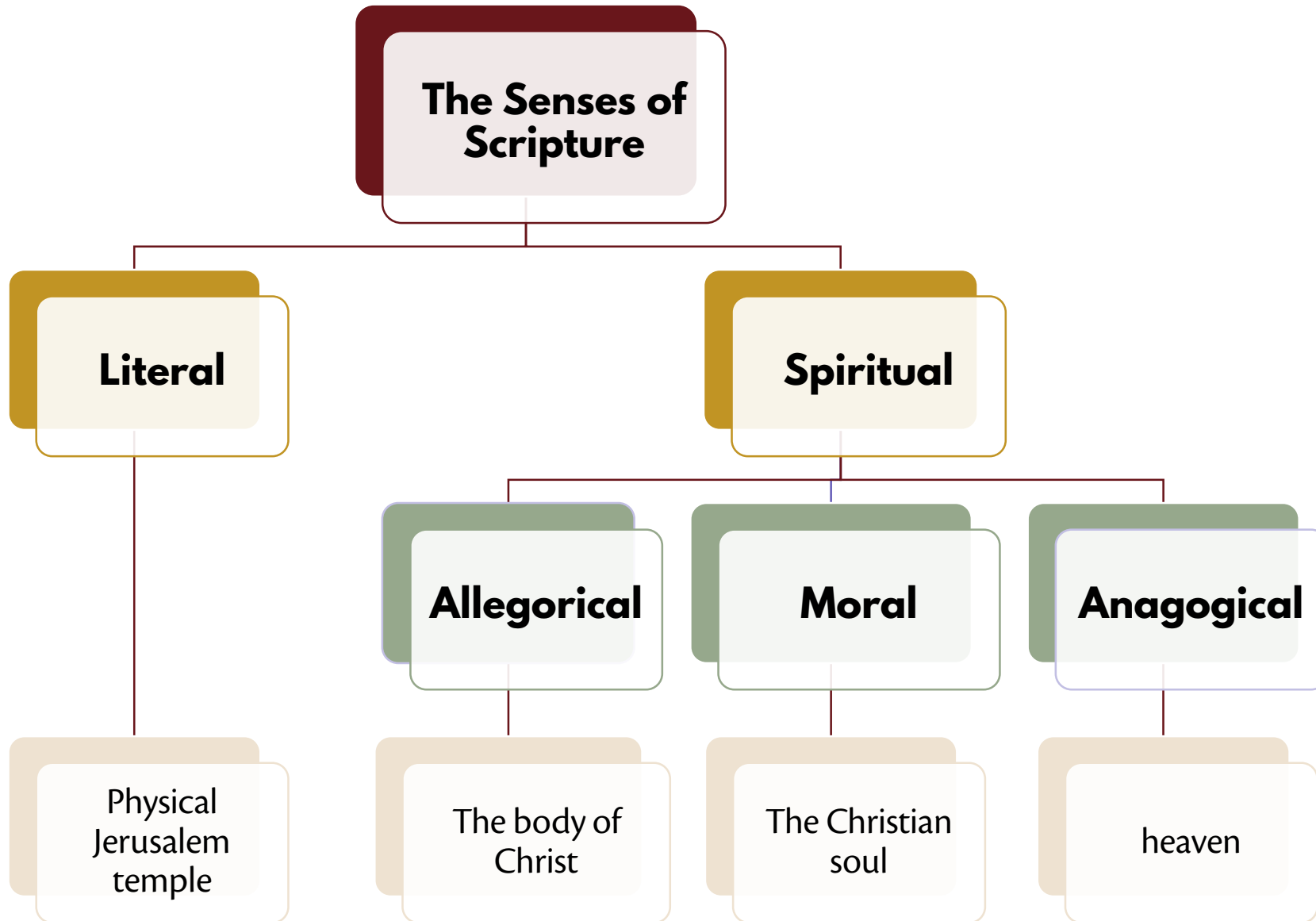
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Moral Sense



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Anagogical Sense



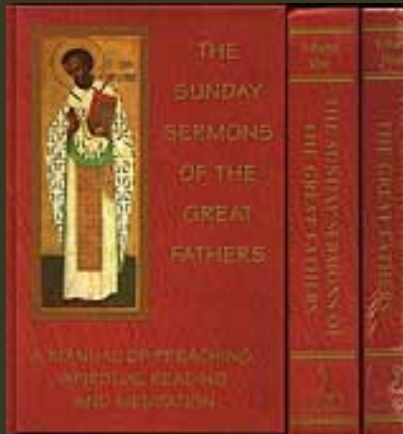
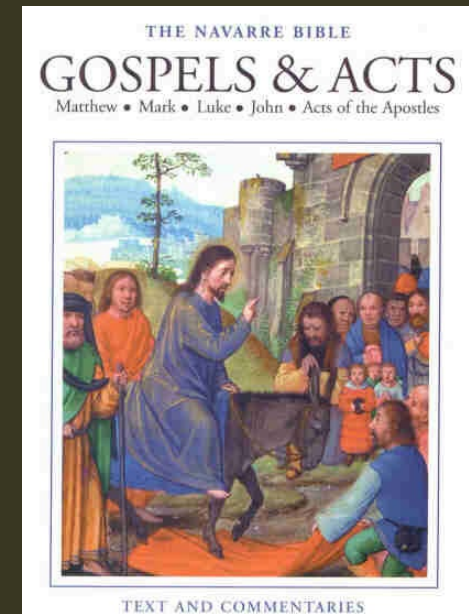
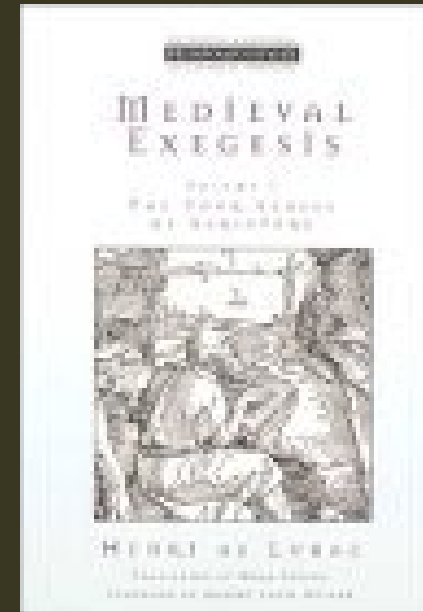
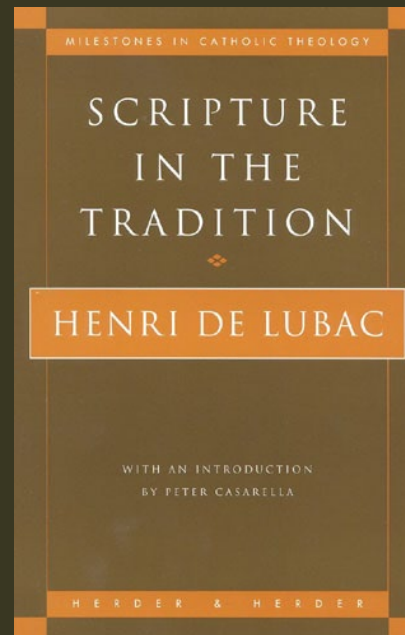
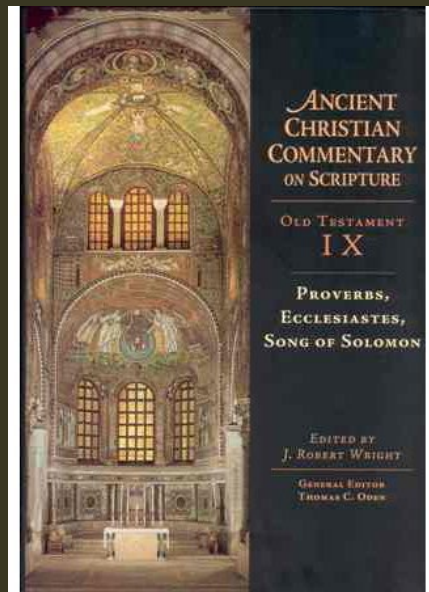
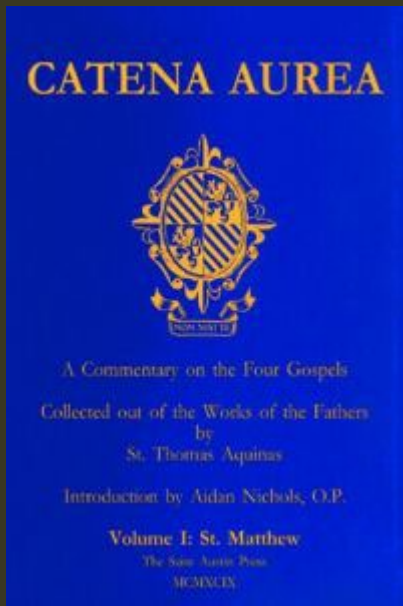
- Properly theological
- Defends supernatural truths without being either modernist or fundamentalist
- Gives fuller and profound knowledge of Christ
- Inculcates a correct understanding of history, providence, revelation and liturgy





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The future: a return to
the Spiritual Senses of Scripture



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Recommended Texts