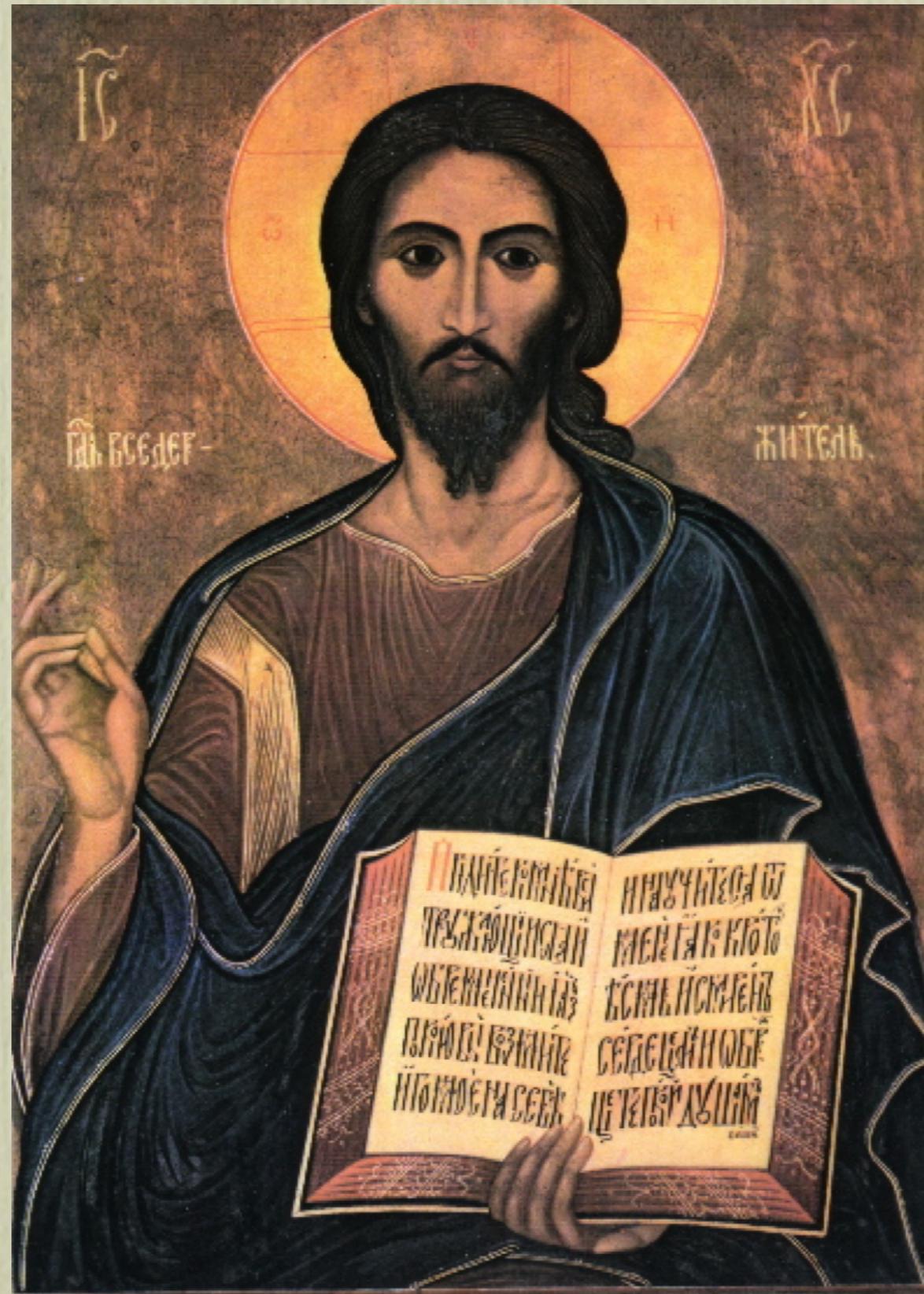


Bible



The New Testament

The New Testament has its origins in the religious experience of Jesus' disciples.

1John 1:1-4

'We declare to you what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life ... We declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.'



The New Testament is an inspired response to God's Word-made-flesh

- Raymond Brown writes: 'The Bible is the literary objectification of a faith that is a response to revelation' (TS, 1981, page 9). He goes on to define Scripture as 'divine revelation to which human beings have given expression in words' (TS, 1981, 13).
- Ray Collins writes: 'Though canonised by long usage, "word of God" should not be used of the Scriptures without further hermeneutical reflection ... A distance is to be maintained conceptually between the scriptural expression and the self-communication of God in itself ... Theologically it is less confusing to state that the Scriptures witness to the word of God' (NJBC, 1033).

‘What we encounter in the Sacred Scriptures is first of all the objectivization of the belief in and understanding of Christ which was possessed by the Church or the local congregation. In other words it is the answer to the revelation of God. In this answer, however, the word of God itself is expressed, for this word has entered into the answer of the Church and is effective in it. On the other hand we must not forget that God’s word, which enters into our human answer of faith, nevertheless always transcends it’ (Schmaus, Dogma I, 188).

PBC 1993 pages 52-53

‘It is the believing community that provides a truly adequate context for interpreting canonical texts. In this context faith and the Holy Spirit enrich exegesis. Church authority, exercised as a service of the community, must see to it that this interpretation remains faithful to the great Tradition which has produced the texts.’

1893 - Leo XIII

‘Providentissimus Deus’

‘to protect Catholic Interpretation from the attacks of rationalist science’(1993, §3)

1943 - Pius XII

‘Divino Afflante Spiritu’

‘to defend Catholic interpretation from attacks from those who oppose the use of science in exegesis’(1993, §3)

1965 - Vat II *Dei Verbum*

1993 - PBC ‘The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church’

‘The Church is not afraid of scientific criticism. She distrusts only preconceived opinions that claim to be based on science, but which in an underhand way cause science to depart from its domain’ (n. 4).

2001 - PBC *The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*

Continuity ... Discontinuity ... Progression (n. 64-65).

John-Paul II, Introduction to 1993 document (page 19-20).

‘To arrive at a completely valid interpretation of words inspired by the Holy Spirit, one must first be guided by the Holy Spirit and it is necessary to pray for that, to pray much, to ask in prayer for the interior light of the Spirit and docilely accept that light, to ask for the love that alone enables one to understand the language of God who is love. While engaged in the work of interpretation, one must remain in the presence of God as much as possible.’

The Old Testament

1. Provides the language (images) in which Jesus' contemporaries expressed their insights into Jesus

2001 - PBC [The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible](#)

Continuity ... Discontinuity ... Progression (n. 64-65).

2. Is to be read through the prism of the New Testament
(with the mind and heart of Jesus)

It was said to you of old, but I say to you

Fulfilled in Jesus

3. The Old Testament communicates revelation in its own right



Who is the human author?

Why were the words cherished, remembered, copied, handed down?

It is in its precise limitations that its beauty and revelatory power is found.

In an article 'The influence of oral tradition upon exegesis and the senses of Scripture' in CBQ 1958, pages 299-326, Carol Stuhlmüller writes:

'In the life of the Hebrew nation oral tradition is seen as the normal means of transmitting religious thought ... The explanation of oral tradition as the recital under religious auspices of God's redemptive acts sinks the roots of biblical religion into the saving events of the past, but at the same time keeps the past alive in an ever-changing present ... One of the most characteristic qualities of oral transmission was its propensity to actualise older texts and bring them up to date by means of a continuous redaction

In an article 'The influence of oral tradition upon exegesis and the senses of Scripture' in CBQ 1958, pages 299-326, Carol Stuhlmueller writes:

'When a later inspired author cites a pre-existing sacred text, he does not confine himself to the original meaning of the earlier author. He will be inclined to adapt the text to the theological development of his own day. He will manifest his devotion to God's Word, by expressing his own thoughts, which are also God's, in the sacrosanct language of the past. He will use the sacred words to express his own consciously intended sense.'

Dianne Bergant

‘The prophetic word
was always relevant
in the historical moment
of proclamation.

Since it was born out of religious or political crisis, its purpose was to speak to that crisis.

It clung to the past to the extent that it was in continuity with the fundamental religious traditions.

It predicted the future to the extent that that future would be the consequence of the present.

The primary intent of prophecy was to call the people to fidelity to their religious responsibilities here and now.’

Joseph Blenkinsopp Isaiah 1-39 in the Anchor Bible Series
(Doubleday 2000)

... an Isaian tradition carried forward by means of a cumulative process of reinterpretation and reapplication'(page 74).

'The book has undergone successive restructuring and rearrangement in the course of a long editorial history'(page 83).

Writings taken into the Babylonian Exile

Prophetic texts

Amos Hosea

Isaiah and Micah

Jeremiah, Zephaniah and Nahum

Reflections on Yahwism (Deuteronomy)

Fragments of patriarchal stories

Individual stories about Moses

Accounts of struggles the tribal groups had in Canaan and in Transjordan.

Texts covering aspects of social organisation from Samaria and Jerusalem

Some regulations covering key aspects of the cult

Records from Samaria and Jerusalem of battles and treaties.

The Torah as we have it was composed against the background of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, the end of the monarchy, and the exile in Babylon. We should expect to find these calamitous events casting a huge shadow over the text, as well as supplying the key questions that the authors were desperate to answer as they pieced their story together.

Priestly 'School'

Deuteronomistic 'School'

Isaian 'School'

Robert Alter 'The Art of Biblical Narrative'

'The Hebrew writers manifestly took delight in the artful limning [illuminating a manuscript] of these lifelike characters and actions, and so they created an unexhausted source of delight for a hundred generation of readers. But that pleasure of imaginative play is deeply interfused with a sense of great spiritual urgency. The biblical writers fashion their personages with a complicated, sometimes alluring, often fiercely insistent individuality, because it is in the stubbornness of human individuality that each man and woman encounters God or ignores Him, responds to, or resists, Him.'

Robert Alter 'The Art of Biblical Narrative' (continued)

'Subsequent religious tradition has by and large encouraged us to take the Bible seriously rather than to enjoy it, but the paradoxical truth of the matter may well be that by learning to enjoy the biblical stories more fully as stories, we shall also come to see more clearly what they mean to tell us about God, man, and the perilously momentous realm of history.'

Genesis 1-11 Primeval Narrative

Genesis 12-50 Patriarchal Stories

Exodus-Leviticus-Numbers-Deuteronomy Moses Stories

Joshua-Judges-Samuel Stories of Tribes and Early Kings

PBC 1993

‘To avoid purely subjective readings, an interpretation valid for contemporary times will be founded on the study of the text and such an interpretation will constantly submit its presuppositions to verification by the text’(page 80).

‘One must reject as unauthentic every interpretation alien to the meaning expressed by the human authors in their written text. To admit the possibility of such alien meanings would be the equivalent of cutting off the biblical message from its root, which is the Word of God in its historical communication; it would also mean opening the door to interpretations of a wildly subjective nature.’(page 84).

‘A final word is appropriate about how the socio-literary pluriformity of the Hebrew Bible compels Jews and Christians to rethink all forms of confession of faith and of reflective theology that base themselves on these writings as Scripture.

It is abundantly clear that the Hebrew Bible, far from presenting a body of fixed religious ideas or doctrines, gives us theological reflections embedded in historically changing social situations and articulated in concrete literary genres and genre complexes. The theology of the Hebrew Bible is thus both ‘theology of social struggle’ and ‘theology of literary imagination’.

There is no ‘message’ of the Hebrew Bible that can be lifted out of its social contexts and literary forms without irreparable loss both of its original meaning and of its potency to speak meaningfully to us.

Gottwald page 606 continued

Likewise it is evident that the theological expressions of the Hebrew Bible do not speak into a present vacuum of 'pure faith'. We Jews and Christians experience God in our own historically evolving social situations through concrete forms of speech and imaging which are not simply repetitions of biblical speech but are the complex product of post biblical religious and secular culture as these realities are presently embodied in ourselves. In employing the Hebrew Bible as a mediator of religious faith and theological reflection, we must at one and the same time interpret both the social situations and the literary idioms of the biblical texts and the social situations and the literary idioms of ourselves as interpreters/actors ...

Certain strands of Jewish and Christian 'orthodoxy' try to circumvent the radical socio-historic process of contemporary believing. They attempt to 'protect' God and the Bible by raising them above and beyond qualification by historical circumstances or reduction to the psycho-social sphere of writers and readers. This defence ploy fails ... because it disembowels the Hebrew Bible of its socio-literary specificity and lobotomises its religious bite and thrust.

This 'spiritualising' and 'abstracting' theology is in itself the most severe and destructive form of 'reductionism', for it flattens and denatures the powerful individualities of style and content that play throughout the rich texture of the Hebrew Bible. The lively voices that speak concretely of, for, and to God become a boring and pretentious monotone as out of place in the biblical milieu as in our own.'

Excellent summary of the errors in Fundamentalist Interpretation (PBC 1993, pages 72-75).

‘The basic problem with fundamentalist interpretation is that, refusing to take into account the historical character of biblical revelation, it makes itself incapable of accepting the full truth of the Incarnation itself ... It refuses to admit that the inspired Word of God has been expressed in human language and that this Word has been expressed, under divine inspiration, by human authors possessed of limited capacities and resources’(1993, page 73).

- On the 'spiritual' meaning, the Pontifical Biblical Commission writes: 'We can define the spiritual sense, as understood by Christian faith, as the meaning expressed by the biblical texts when read, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, in the context of the paschal mystery of Christ and of the new life which flows from it ... While there is a distinction between the two senses, the spiritual sense can never be stripped of its connection with the literal sense. The latter remains the indispensable foundation. Otherwise, one could not speak of the 'fulfilment' of Scripture. Indeed, in order that there be fulfilment, a relationship of continuity and of conformity is essential. But it is also necessary that there be transition to a higher level of reality' (1993, page 85)

Ignace de la Potterie SJ, *Communio* 4, 1986, page 325

‘It is not a matter of looking for a “spiritual sense”
beyond the “literal sense”, but of finding one within it.

The Spirit in the letter.

The aim is to arrive at an interior penetration of the text,
as it was written for believers by inspired believers,
according to their experience of God.

Literal exegesis must open itself,
deepen itself, broaden itself,
to become spiritual interpretation.’

To read Scripture is to accept an invitation to prayer

‘God reveals himself ... to invite and receive into his own company’(DV 2).

‘Growth in insight into the realities and words that are being passed on comes through the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts ... It comes from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which they experience’(DV 8).

‘In the sacred books the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children and talks with them... The Word of God is strength for their faith, food for the soul, and a pure and lasting fount of spiritual life’(DV 21).

Ephrem Commentary on the Diatessaron I,18-19

‘Lord, who can grasp all the wealth of just one of your words? What we understand is much less than what we leave behind, like thirsty people who drink from a fountain. For your word, Lord, has many shades of meaning, just as those who study it have many different points of view. The Lord has coloured his words with many hues so that each person who studies it can see in it what he or she loves. The Lord has hidden many treasures in his word so that each of us is enriched as we meditate on it ... Coming into contact with some share of its treasure, you should not think that the only thing contained in the word is what you yourself have found.’

Origen on Psalm 16

The portion (heritage) of Christ is the Father, and also the people whom the Father gives to him ... The person who has renounced everything of this world can say: 'YHWH is my portion of the inheritance for ever'. YHWH makes himself bread, giving us his teaching and strengthening the heart of whoever eats of it. He makes himself a chalice in the measure in which we contemplate the truth, and he gives the joy of knowledge to whoever drinks from it with love. The true vine offers us the cup and whoever drinks says with gratitude: 'He has filled my heart with joy'.

1. This is how inspired people in the past understood God to be revealing his presence and action in their lives
2. How might this help us to be sensitive to how God is present and active now
3. Focus is on forming Consciences (John XXIII)

Who am I? Who are we?

Who are we being called to be?

What are we being called to do?

Keep our focus on Jesus, God's Focal Word

Be informed by tradition

Pray for a listening heart

Psalm 95:7-8

O that today you would listen to his voice!
Do not harden your hearts.

Deuteronomy 5:3

Not with our ancestors
did YHWH make this covenant,
but with us,
who are all of us here alive today.

‘Secular’ Priesthood: Holiness through belonging

‘The spiritual life of the priest should be profoundly marked by a missionary zeal and dynamism. In the exercise of their ministry and the witness of their lives, priests have the duty to form the community entrusted to them as a truly missionary community’(J-P II, I will give you shepherds, n.32)

A special strength of the secular priest is precisely that he is in the world. He knows it. His experience informs his insights which in turn contribute to pastoral decisions that are informed by his belonging to people in their everyday lives. This ‘unspectacular matter-of-factness’(Tony Philpot), this ‘street-wise’ quality of his ministry and life is the seed-bed for special redemptive love.



Radiant Light Divine,
shine throughout this night.

Words and Music: Rufino Zaragoza,
OFM.

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Jesus,
Holy One,
praise to you
our Light.



**As the daylight fades, and come eventide,
dwell among us, Holy Fire.**

Radiant Light Divine, shine throughout this night.



Jesus,
Holy One,
praise to
you
our Light.



A photograph of a sunset. The sky is filled with clouds, transitioning from a deep blue at the top to a bright orange and red near the horizon. In the foreground, the dark silhouettes of tree branches with leaves are visible, framing the sky. Below the horizon, a dark silhouette of a forest or landscape is visible.

*As the daylight fades, and come eventide,
dwell among us, Holy Fire.*



Radiant Light Divine,
shine throughout this night



Jesus,
Holy One,
praise to you
our Light.



As the daylight fades, and come eventide,
dwell among us, Holy Fire.



**Radiant Light Divine,
shine throughout this night.**



Jesus,
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our Light.

A glowing candle is positioned in the center of a dark, circular, textured opening, possibly a cave or a tunnel. The candle's light is bright yellow and orange, illuminating the surrounding rough, rocky walls. The overall scene is dark, with the candle providing the primary source of light and warmth. The texture of the walls is uneven and appears to be made of natural rock or earth.

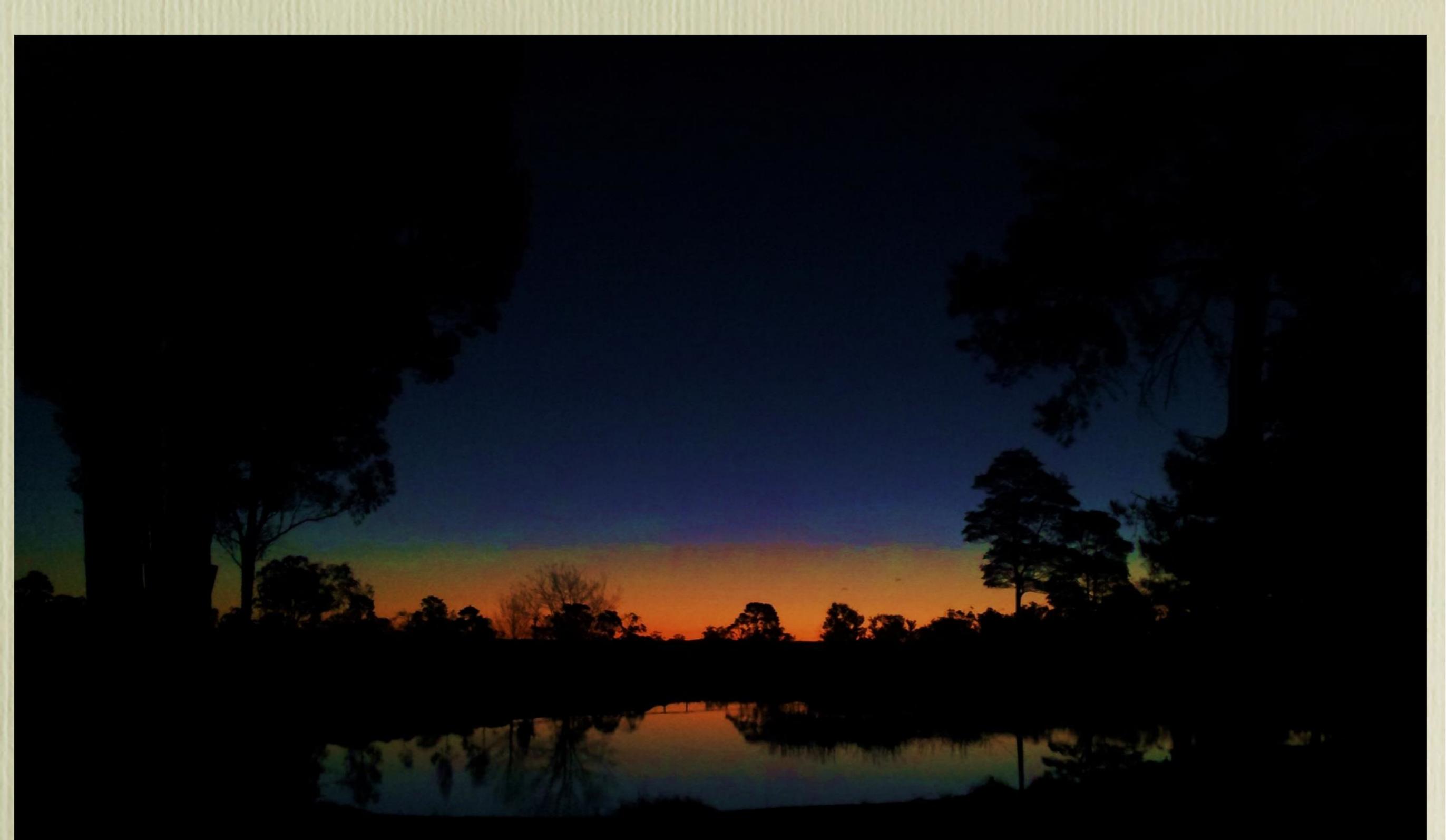
As the daylight fades, and come eventide,
dwell among us, Holy Fire.

A landscape photograph capturing a sunset or sunrise. The sky is a deep, dark blue, with a horizontal band of vibrant red and orange light just above the horizon. The horizon itself is a dark silhouette of a line of trees. The foreground is a dark, flat expanse, possibly a field or a road.

Radiant Light Divine,
shine throughout this night.



Jesus,
Holy One,
praise to you
our Light.



*As the daylight fades, and come eventide,
dwell among us, Holy Fire.*



