

Malloy, Joseph J.  
A brief study...  
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**A**  
**BRIEF**  
**STUDY**  
*of the*  
**FOUR GOSPELS**

**A DISCUSSION CLUB  
TEXT WITH OUTLINE**

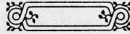
*by*  
*Rev. Joseph J. Malloy, C.S.P.*



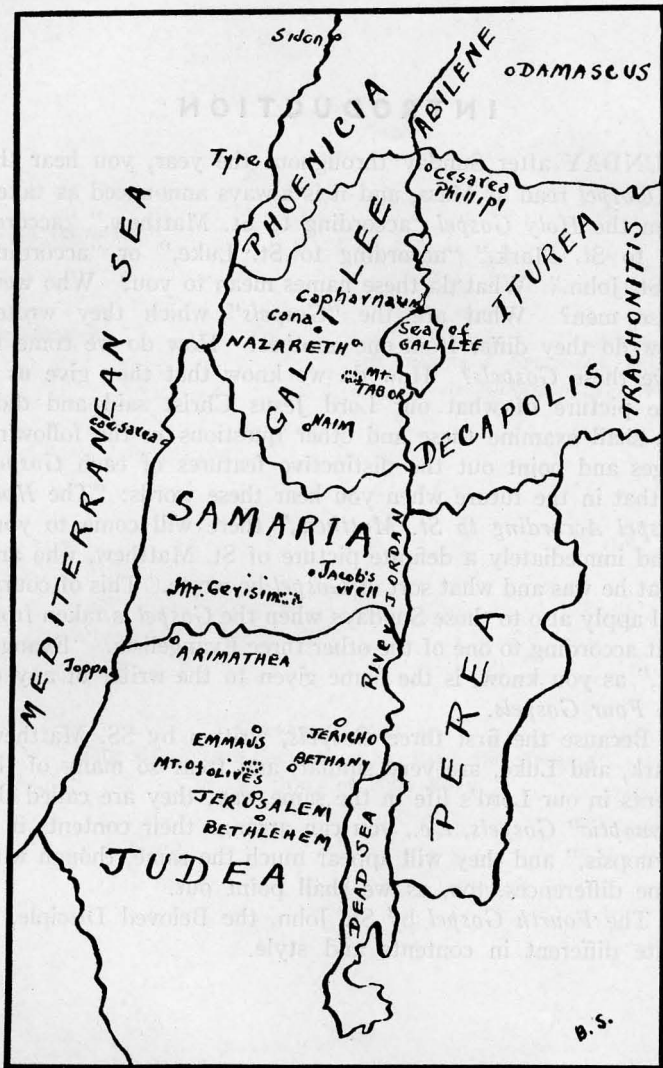
# A BRIEF STUDY OF THE FOUR GOSPELS

BY

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PALESTINE IN THE TIME OF CHRIST

B.S.

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## CHAPTER I

### BIBLE MANUSCRIPTS

**A**FTER the Ascension of our Blessed Lord into Heaven and the Coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, the Apostles began preaching what their Divine Master had taught them during their association with Him for the three years of the Public Ministry. They preached—they did not write. That is to say, most of them did not write anything which has been preserved, and only five of the twelve Apostles wrote any part of what is now in our New Testament. St. Matthew wrote the *First Gospel*; St. John, the *Fourth Gospel*, three short *Epistles*, and *The Apocalypse*; St. Peter wrote two short *Epistles*; St. Jude (or Thaddeus) wrote one short *Epistle*, and St. James wrote an *Epistle*. The other two *Gospels* were written by St. Mark, a disciple of St. Peter, and by St. Luke, a disciple of St. Paul. St. Luke also wrote *The Acts of the Apostles*. St. Paul wrote fourteen *Epistles*. He had become a Christian just a few years after the Death of our Lord. None of these writings appeared until several years after the Apostles had begun preaching the doctrines of Christ.

### Why No Originals?

We shall concern ourselves here only with the *Four Gospels*. St. Matthew wrote the *First Gospel* in Aramaic, the language of the country where our Lord lived. This is one of the Semitic group of languages; it differs from the ancient Hebrew of the Old Testament. The other three *Gospels* were written in Greek, because Greek was the language of literature and culture throughout most of the countries around the east end of the Mediterranean Sea. Unfortunately, none of the original writings of the Evangelists is known to us. There are three explanations for this:

(1) The material on which most writing was done in the first century, when the Apostles lived, was fragile. It was papyrus. This was made from the pith of the stem of a plant of that name which grew along the Nile River and was also found in Abyssinia, in the Island of Sicily and in Palestine itself; it is now almost extinct, except in Egypt. The papyrus was prepared by cutting the central pith of the reed into longitudinal strips which were laid side by side, with another layer of strips crossing them at right angles. The two layers were then soaked in water and pressed together to make them adhere; they then were dried. For books, the papyrus was formed into rolls by fastening together a number of sheets. By its very nature it was perishable, and we find at the present day only a very few remains of ancient Biblical writings on this material. One of the oldest scraps of papyrus is in Philadelphia, but it contains only eighteen verses of the first chapter of the *Gospel According to St. Matthew*; it was probably written about the middle of the third century. Another small scrap of equal age is in the British Museum. This has a few verses from the *Gospel According to St. John*.

(2) When copies of anything were made, the originals were allowed to perish, because the teaching was taken to be the important thing, not the material on which it was written.

(3) As you know, the followers of Christ were bitterly persecuted during the first three hundred years of Christian history. The persecutors strove not only to kill the Christians, but to destroy their teachings, and therefore in every place where the early Christians were hunted down, Christian writings were also destroyed. However, we are really much better off in the field of New Testament writings than in the field of the Greek and Latin Classics. Most of the copies of the latter are no older than the ninth century of the Christian Era, and the only available manuscripts (abbreviated MSS.) of many of the better known Classics are much more recent. On the other hand, we have MSS. of the New Testament which we know were written in the fourth and fifth centuries.



### **Codex Vaticanus**

The most important of all Greek MSS. is called the *Codex Vaticanus*, because it is in the Vatican Library in Rome. *Codex* is the word used for an ancient MS., especially of the Scriptures, before the invention of printing. This Vatican MS. was written in the first half of the fourth century in Greek letters called *uncials*, which means "inch," because they were about an inch high. It is written on fine parchment. Parchment is made from the skins of calves or goats prepared in a bath of lime and then rubbed with a burnisher; it is very durable. The Vatican MS. contains nearly the entire Bible, written three columns to a page, or two columns for the poetical Books. It has been in the Vatican since the fifteenth century, except for a brief time when the Emperor Napoleon held it in Paris.

In scholarly books treating of Scriptural subjects, all these *uncial* MSS. are represented by capital letters of the Hebrew, Latin and Greek alphabets. The Vatican MS. is called Codex B.

### **Codex Sinaiticus**

The MS. next in importance to the Vatican Codex was also written in the fourth century, in Greek, but its existence did not become known until about a hundred years ago. It is an interesting story. In 1844, a German Biblical scholar named Tischendorf, who was not a Catholic, visited St. Catherine's Monastery near Mount Sinai in Syria. This Monastery was built by the Emperor Justinian in the sixth century. Since 1782 it has housed a Community of Monks forming an independent unit of the Greek Orthodox Church. There, in a rubbish basket, Tischendorf found forty-three leaves of parchment which he recognized contained a Greek text of some parts of the Old Testament. He secured possession of them and published them when he returned to Europe. They are preserved at Leipzig in Germany.

In 1853, Tischendorf visited St. Catherine's Monastery again, at which time he found two short fragments of the Book of Genesis, but nothing else. Six years later he again went there, working with the aid of the Russian Czar, Alexander II, and at that time found a large MS. which he recognized as the major part of the Bible from which the portions found earlier had come. It contained most of the Old Testament, the whole of the New Testament, and two other early Christian writings, all in Greek. Tischendorf persuaded the Monks to present this MS. to the Russian Czar. It is not known how St. Catherine's Monastery came into possession of so important a MS, or how the Monks let it fall into decay. Some of the outer leaves had actually been cut up and used to bind modern books. These were not rescued until 1857, when a Greek clergyman discovered them and turned them over to Tischendorf. So the entire Bible contained in these MSS. was published in four sections, between 1844 and 1867.

For years this *Codex Sinaiticus*, as it is called from the place where it was found, was preserved in the Imperial Library at St. Petersburg. The Soviet Government, which came into power after the Russian Revolution, had no interest in this Bible except for what money they could get for it. The British Government negotiated to buy it for 100,000 pounds (nearly half a million dollars). Half the money was raised by popular subscription and the other half was supplied by the British Government. It was the greatest book sale of all time. The precious MS. was brought to England on Christmas Eve, 1933, and is now preserved in the famous British Museum in London.

This Codex is about as old as the Vatican MS; it was certainly written no later than the fourth century. It is estimated that the skins of about two hundred animals were used to provide the three hundred and forty-seven parchment leaves which comprise the MS. It is represented by the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet called Aleph.

### **Codex Alexandrinus**

A third important MS. which contains the New Testament is also in the British Museum in London. It is called the *Codex Alexandrinus*, because it came to England from the Library of Alexandria, in Egypt. It was a gift to King James I. It contains nearly all the Old Testament and all of the New Testament with just a few verses missing, and it also contains some other writings, not part of the Bible. It was probably written in Egypt early in the fifth century. The leaves are thin parchment and each page has two columns of about fifty lines each. It is represented by the letter "A."

### **Manuscripts Before Printing**

There are now in existence over 3,000 MSS. of the Bible, or of parts of the Bible, which were written before the invention of printing in the fifteenth century. Remember that during all these years, from the time of Christ to the fifteenth century, everything that was written about Him and His Life and His Teachings had to be done by hand, and therefore all these MSS. of the Bible which we know to have existed before the invention of printing, were laboriously copied, letter by letter, by hand. Of course, after the invention of printing it was very easy to multiply copies of the Bible.

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORY OF THE GOSPEL TEXTS

#### Apocryphal Gospels

**W**HILE the New Testament writers, whom we mentioned in the last chapter, were compiling their records under the direct inspiration of God, many other people were also writing on Christ's teachings. Some of these were devoted and faithful Christians; some had strayed from the true doctrines and wrote to support their own errors, while others were the enemies of Christ. Therefore we find, scattered through early Christian writings, references to over fifty Apocryphal Gospels. "Apocryphal" comes from the Greek word "apokryphos," which means "hidden"; an Apocryphal Gospel, then, is one whose real author is hidden, and it is therefore of doubtful authorship and authority. Because of this condition, and because of the confusion that existed in the minds of ordinary Christians, the Church made an official decision in a Council which met at Carthage in North Africa, in the year 397, listing the names and authors of Books which were truly inspired and which therefore were to be considered by all Catholics as constituting the Bible. It was through the influence of the great St. Augustine that the Council of Carthage made this very important pronouncement. About twenty years later, another Council of Carthage reiterated this decision on the contents of the Bible. This is what is called fixing the "Canon" of the Scriptures, and the Books which were listed in this manner as being part of the inspired Word of God are said to be "Canonical."

#### Early Testimony

Even before these Councils of Carthage, however, we find clear and unmistakable evidence that our *Four Gospels* were acknowledged as inspired records of the Life and Teachings of

Jesus Christ. Writing at the end of the first century, St. Clement, who was the third successor of St. Peter as Bishop of Rome, testified to their authenticity, and in the next century we have the evidence of St. Irenaeus of Lyons, France. He died in the year 202, so most of his writing must have been done in the last twenty or thirty years of the second century. He is important, because he was a disciple of St. Polycarp, who was a disciple of the Apostle St. John. About 500 quotations from our *Four Gospels* are found in the works of St. Irenaeus, and several times he makes clear that in his opinion there are only *Four Gospels*. During the time when Irenaeus was writing, probably about the year 175, someone compiled a list of the Sacred Books. It is called the "Muratorian Fragment," from the name of the man, Muratori, who discovered it in the year 1740. It contains the names of all but three of the Books in our New Testament. The first part of it is lost, but it begins by saying that the Third Book is *St. Luke's Gospel*, so the author must have known about our first two Gospels; then the list goes on to mention *St. John's Gospel*. Again, in the following century, we find in the writings of St. Eusebius, unmistakable proof regarding the position held by our *Four Gospels*; this eminent Church historian lived from the year 267 to the year 338.

### Latin Bible

We still, however, have to answer the question how these *Gospels*, written, as we saw before, in Greek, come to us now in English. There lived, in the fourth century, a very remarkable man, known to history as St. Jerome. He was born in the year 346, near Aquileia on the north shore of the Adriatic Sea. Jerome was not baptized until he was twenty years of age, and some thirteen years later he was ordained a priest. He lived in Bethlehem from 386 to 420, and there he accomplished the stupendous work of revising practically the whole Bible and translating it into Latin. He began with the New Testament, which he revised from old Greek MS. This work

of St. Jerome is called "*The Latin Vulgate*," and in 1546 the Council of Trent declared the *Vulgate* to be the official Bible of the Catholic Church. For many centuries Latin was the language in all Western Europe, and everyone who could read at all could read Latin.

### European Languages

In the later Middle Ages, however, when other European languages developed in various countries, the *Gospels* and other parts of the Bible were translated into English, French, German, Spanish, and several other languages. Remember that this was before the invention of printing. The charge used to be made against the Catholic Church that she kept the Bible from the people and always refused to give it to them in their own language, and we have been told, furthermore, that it was only through the efforts of some who broke away from the authority of the Church, even before the beginning of Protestantism, that the Bible was given to the English people in their own tongue. One of the men who made such a translation was John Wycliffe, in 1382, but the great St. Thomas More wrote on this subject: "The whole Bible, long before Wycliffe's day, was by virtuous and well learned men translated into the English tongue, and by good and godly people, with devotion and soberness, well and reverently read."

### German

This same unfounded charge was made with regard to Germany. We have been told that Martin Luther was the first to give the Bible to the German people in their own tongue. Printing was invented in 1450, and the first book ever printed was the "Mazarin Bible" at Mayence (Mainz), Germany, in 1456—twenty-seven years before Luther was born. This Bible was printed by the famous Gutenberg, and the first known copy of it was discovered in the Mazarin Library in Paris in 1760. In the Archives of the Paulist Fathers

in New York there is a two-volume Bible in German, printed in 1483, the year in which Martin Luther was born. It is illustrated in colors and is the first illustrated printed Bible in German.

### **English Bible**

Our English Catholic version, which is called the "Rheims-Douay," is the work of English Catholic scholars who fled from England because of the persecution of the Church there in the sixteenth century, and established colleges at these two cities in France. Our *Gospels* and the rest of the *New Testament* were first published at the English College at Rheims, in 1582. The *Old Testament* was published after the College moved to Douay in 1609. In the middle of the eighteenth century, the famous Bishop Challoner, Vicar-Apostolic of the London district, revised the Bible, because changes in the English language were making more and more words of the Rheims-Douay version obsolete.

Since the days of Bishop Challoner our language has undergone still further modification and the *New Testament* which he gave us no longer clearly expresses the thought in a way which can be easily understood by twentieth century readers. We are therefore in need of a new revision and, as you probably know, late in the year 1939, a group of eminent Catholic scholars published the first part of a revised form of the *Gospels*. The entire *New Testament* in the new version may be expected soon.

### **Authenticity of the Gospels**

Two of the *Gospels* were written by Apostles who were eyewitnesses of most of the events they record and who actually heard most of the words of our Lord which they wrote down; the authors of the other two *Gospels* received their information directly from others who were eyewitnesses and who had heard the Saviour's words. Did the Four Evangelists faithfully and truly report what they had seen

and heard? We have many weighty reasons for saying positively that they did:

(1) It is historically certain beyond a shadow of doubt that the first three *Gospels* were written within thirty or forty years of the events narrated, *i. e.*, within the life time of many who were familiar with these events and who would readily have detected errors or inaccuracies, if there had been any. The *Fourth Gospel* was certainly written before the end of the First Century. Besides the information which each Evangelist had personally, they all used oral and written sources which go back to the first days of the Apostolic teaching.

(2) The *Gospels* all bear the obvious stamp of sincerity which any careful reader can see for himself. Their authors record incidents which reflect no credit upon themselves, as, for example, that they fell asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane and fled when their Master was apprehended, that they quarreled among themselves as to who would be first, that they did not understand many of our Lord's Parables and other Teachings; the fact that our Lord reproved them many times, that Peter, who they all agree was chief among the Apostles, denied his Lord after having protested vehemently that he never would; that they lost faith in Christ after His death, and completely forgot, or disbelieved, His prophecy that He would rise again. They record the most startling facts simply and without comment, for example, the great Miracles of our Lord, even the raising of the dead to life; they record the *fact* of the Resurrection, but do not describe it. This is particularly significant; it demonstrates the honesty and sincerity of the Evangelists, for if any one of them had been romancing and using his imagination to embellish the Life of Christ, the most natural thing for him to have done would have been to *describe* the Resurrection, as they did the Transfiguration, which some of them saw. They did not see the Resurrection, so they do not claim to have seen it, they saw only the empty tomb and the Angels, and then they saw the Risen Lord. It is conclusive proof of the trustworthiness of the Evangelists that



they did not describe the stone being rolled back and their Divine Master coming forth glorious and alive from the grave where they had laid Him on Good Friday afternoon.

(3) Where the *Gospels* mention, even casually, persons, places, customs, incidents that can be checked by secular history, the *Gospels* are found to be accurate. For example, St. Matthew tells us (St. Matt. ii. 20-23) that Archelaus ruled in the place of Herod his father and was cruel like his father, and we know this from other historians. St. Matthew tells us about the Temple Tax called the *didrachma* (St. Matt. xvii. 23), without any word of explanation; the Jewish historian, Josephus, writing at a later date, mentions it and explains it. The census at the time of our Lord's Birth is another instance, though hostile critics of the *Gospels* have claimed that St. Luke made a glaring mistake in saying that "this enrolling was first made by Cyrinus, the governor of Syria" (St. Luke ii. 2). They quote the historian Josephus, who states that this Cyrinus did not become governor till several years after the Birth of Christ. But modern historical research clears away this difficulty and shows that St. Luke was correct, because Cyrinus was governor of Syria twice, and it is to his second term in office and a census taken at that time that Josephus refers. St. Luke knew this, and therefore, in the Gospel, he speaks of a "first census," and in his later Book, the *Acts of the Apostles* (v. 37), he records an event which happened "in the days of the enrolling," *i. e.*, another census.

Finally, it is important to notice that when the *Gospels*, and especially the *Gospel According to St. John*, mention places in Jerusalem and in other parts of Palestine, they are so accurate that we know their authors had precise and first-hand information about the entire country. Remember that the *Fourth Gospel* was written by St. John late in the First Century, after the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple. It is remarkable, therefore, to note the exactness with which St. John identifies places in Jerusalem, for example, he describes the pool of Bethsaida in the following words: "Now there is at

Jerusalem a pond called Probatica, which in Hebrew is named Bethsaida, having five porches" (St. John v. 2), and then he distinguishes another pool, that of Siloe, to which our Lord sent the man born blind (St. John ix. 7). He identifies the place of Christ's trial before Pilate by both the Greek and Hebrew names; he tells us that Pilate "sat down in the judgment seat in the place which is called Lithostrotos, and in Hebrew, Gabbatha" (St. John xix. 13). Furthermore, he is thoroughly familiar with the Jewish objection to entering a pagan dwelling at the time of the Pasch, and, in recording that our Lord was brought before Pilate, St. John tells us that "they went not into the hall, that they might not be defiled, but that they might eat the Pasch," and then he adds that "Pilate, therefore, went out to them" (St. John xviii. 28, 29).

### **Inspiration**

We shall say only a few brief words on this important subject. We have an official statement from the Vatican Council; speaking of the Books of the Bible, the Fathers of the Council stated:

"These Books are held by the Church as sacred and canonical, not as having been composed by merely human labor and afterwards approved by her authority, nor merely because they contain revelation without error, but because, written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they have God for their author, and have been transmitted to the Church as such."

More recently, Pope Leo XIII in his Encyclical, *Providentissimus Deus*, said on the subject of inspiration: "The Holy Ghost Himself, by His supernatural power, stirred up and impelled the Biblical writers to write, and assisted them while writing, in such a manner that they conceived in their minds exactly, and determined to commit to writing faithfully, and render in exact language, with infallible truth, all that God commanded and nothing else." (See article "Inspiration of the Bible," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, viii., pp. 45-50).

## CHAPTER III

### THE HOLY LAND

**T**HE Jewish world of the first century, into which our Blessed Lord came, is very well known. Its politics, its philosophy and its religion are all in the full light of history. Not only do our *Gospels* tell us about this world, but we have the studies of learned men who have unearthed the secrets of archeology and of the ancient languages of all those countries around the Mediterranean Sea. Christ our Lord was born in the reign of the Emperor Augustus, and He died while Tiberius was Emperor. In the generation immediately after Christ there lived the historians Josephus, Plutarch and Tacitus. Many of the persons mentioned in the *New Testament* are well-known historical characters.

#### Palestine

The country where our Lord and His Apostles lived in the first century was at the crossroads of the ancient world. Palestine is at the east end of the Mediterranean Sea, with Syria to the northeast and Arabia to the east; with Asia-Minor (Turkey) to the northwest, and Egypt to the southwest. The warring armies of all these and several other countries marched back and forth through Palestine. This little country was about as large as the state of New Hampshire, and much the same shape, for Palestine, at our Lord's time, was approximately 190 miles from north to south and 85 miles across at its widest part.

#### The River Jordan

A little east of the middle of this territory ran the historic River Jordan, from north to south; the upper portion of the river flowed into the Sea of Galilee, and continued south from there to the Dead Sea. Most of the events in our Lord's life happened to the west of the River Jordan, where the territory

in that day had three main divisions, Galilee, Samaria and Judea. In the far north was Phoenicia with the Lebanon Mountains; directly south and east lay the Province of Galilee, where so many of the places mentioned in the *Gospels* are located: Nazareth, Naim, Mount Tabor, Bethsaida and Capernaum. The River Jordan and the Sea of Galilee formed the eastern border of the province. The Sea of Galilee was sometimes called the Lake of Genesareth, or the Sea of Tiberius; it is oval in shape, about thirteen miles long and nearly seven miles wide. Directly south of Galilee was Samaria, extending from the River Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea. The Samaritans, of whom we shall speak later, lived there. Only a few of the events in our Lord's public life occurred in this part of Palestine.

### **Judea**

Continuing south again, we come to the important Province of Judea, with the River Jordan and the Dead Sea forming its eastern border and the Mediterranean Sea its western limits. Jerusalem was the Capital of Judea, and here were the other well-known Gospel cities of Bethlehem, Jericho and Bethany, as well as Calvary and the Mount of Olives.

### **East of the Jordan**

The territory to the east of the River Jordan was divided into several provinces, not of great importance for our Gospel narrative, except that some of them are mentioned in the Gospel for the Fourth Sunday of Advent, when we read from *St. Luke's Gospel* that the preaching of St. John the Baptist began while Philip was "Tetrarch of Iturea and the country of Trachonitis, and Lysanias Tetrarch of Abilina." The former Tetrarchy lay directly east of Galilee. In its northern part was the town of Caesarea Philippi, where an important event in our Lord's Public Ministry took place, namely the magnificent Confession of St. Peter and our Lord's pronouncement that Peter was the Rock upon which He would build His

Church. North of this country we come to Abilina. The famous City of Damascus was located here. This city does not enter into the Gospel history, but is important, nevertheless, being the scene of the Conversion of St. Paul.

Continuing this account of the geography of the country east of the Jordan, and coming south from Trachonitis, we find Perea and a territory called the Decapolis—Ten Cities. Perea lay east of both Samaria and Judea, and during His Public Ministry our Lord spent a short time here though, as we shall see later, only St. Luke tells us about it, and he records for us several beautiful Parables spoken by our Lord while He was in this part of Palestine. If we keep these main divisions in mind, we shall be better able to follow the details of the journeys of our Blessed Lord and His Apostles during those important years of His Public Ministry.

### **The Holy Land**

This, then, was the country in which our Blessed Lord spent all His earthly life, and for this reason it has always been held sacred by His followers. The Jewish people also consider this their Holy Land, for it was their country for centuries before Christ. Here lived King David and many of the Prophets. Solomon built a great Temple in Jerusalem. The Temple in our Lord's day had been built by King Herod the Great, who reigned at the time of the Nativity and who ordered the slaughter of the Holy Innocents. Herod died shortly after the Birth of our Lord. This Temple of Herod was completely destroyed by the Roman army in the year 70 A. D., thus fulfilling the prophecy made by Christ.

Palestine is likewise held sacred by the Mohammedans. This fanatical religious sect, started by Mohammed early in the seventh century, quickly overran Syria, Palestine, Arabia, Persia, Egypt and North Africa. The Mosque of Omar was built in Jerusalem on the site of the Jewish Temple. The Crusades of the Middle Ages, from 1095 to 1270, were wars undertaken by Christian armies of Europe, in a futile effort to

win back the Holy Land from the Mohammedans. The country remained under Turkish rule until its conquest by the British in the final years of the World War. On July 24, 1922, it was mandated to Great Britain by the League of Nations. The territory under this mandate covers an area of about 10,000 square miles, and in 1939 it was estimated that the population numbered about 1,435,285, of whom 900,249 were Mohammedans, 411,422 Jews, and 123,614 Christians. The City of Jerusalem, in 1938, had a population of 126,000.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW

THE word "*Gospel*" means "good tidings," or "glad tidings," and we give this name to the four Books in the New Testament because they contain the "good news" that Christ our Saviour came and lived and taught and suffered and died in order to redeem mankind. These "glad tidings" are about Christ, so it is proper to speak of any *Gospel* as "*The Gospel of Jesus Christ*," and then to add the author's name, thus: "according to St. Matthew," etc.

#### St. Matthew, the Apostle

The *First Gospel* was written by St. Matthew, one of the Twelve Apostles. In the New Testament we have several references to this Apostle. His name is mentioned twice in his own *Gospel*, twice in the *Gospel According to St. Mark*, twice by St. Luke, and once in the *Acts of the Apostles*, the Book which follows the *Four Gospels* in the New Testament. Besides this, we have two references to "Levi," one by St. Mark and the other by St. Luke; these correspond with one of the passages in the *First Gospel*, so we know that they refer to the same man. In St. Matthew ix. 9, we read: "And when Jesus passed on from thence, He saw a man sitting in the custom house, named Matthew; and He said to him: 'Follow Me.' And he arose up and followed Him." St. Mark, reporting this same event, says: "And when He was passing by, He saw Levi, the son of Alpheus, sitting at the receipt of custom; and He saith to him: 'Follow Me.' And rising up, he followed Him" (St. Mark ii. 14). St. Luke gives a more detailed account of the calling of this Apostle: "And after these things He went forth, and saw a publican named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom, and He said to him: 'Follow Me.' And

leaving all things, he rose up and followed Him. And Levi made him a great feast in his own house; and there was a great company of publicans, and of others, that were at the table with them. But the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying to His disciples: 'Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners?' And Jesus answering said to them: 'They that are whole need not the Physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the just, but sinners to penance'" (St. Luke v. 27-32).

It was quite usual for Jews to have two names; we shall see many instances of this. "Levi" was probably the Apostle's original name; the name "Matthew" may have been conferred upon him by our Lord when He called him. It means "Gift of God."

We know, therefore, that Matthew was the son of Alpheus, and that he was a publican—that is, a collector of customs (see pages 54-56). Matthew is mentioned, of course, each time the Evangelists give us the list of the names of the Twelve Apostles; we find these lists in the first three *Gospels*: St. Matthew x. 3, St. Mark iii. 18, and St. Luke vi. 15. The final reference to St. Matthew is in the first chapter of the *Acts of the Apostles*, where he is mentioned as having been in the Upper Room with the other Apostles and our Blessed Lady.

From Tradition we know that St. Matthew preached in the East, in Syria and Persia; he may also have evangelized part of Macedonia. His Feast Day is observed on September 21st and his symbol is a winged man carrying a lance.

### **St. Matthew, the Evangelist**

The universal consensus of opinion among all the early writers is that St. Matthew wrote the *First Gospel* in Aramaic, and that his purpose was to present the Life and Teachings of Christ our Lord to the Jews. There are many indications in the *Gospel* itself that it was written at a very early date, perhaps as early as the year 41 A. D.—certainly before the destruction of Jerusalem, which, as we saw in the last chapter,



occurred in the year 70 A. D. This *Gospel* is thoroughly Jewish in its allusions and arguments. It contains about thirty-three direct quotations from the Old Testament, besides several more allusions to events in the Hebrew Scriptures. St. Matthew appeals again and again to the Jewish Prophecies, and then shows their fulfillment in the Life and Teachings of Christ. He answers the questions which a Palestinian Jew, living before the destruction of his Holy City, would naturally ask regarding the Person of Jesus Christ, His Message, and the reception given to that Message by Israel.

### **Importance of the First Gospel**

*The Gospel According to St. Matthew* is the most complete of all the *Four Gospels*, and is used by the Church more than any of the others. It provides us with the Sunday Gospels twenty times throughout the year and four times in the Christmas Season: on Christmas Eve, on the Feast of St. Stephen, December 26th; on the Feast of the Holy Innocents, December 28th, and on the Feast of the Epiphany, January 6th.

In reading St. Matthew, it will help us if we see the plan and structure of the *First Gospel*. We shall find that it is divided into two almost equal parts. The first part leads up to a climax—St. Peter's Profession of Faith in the Divinity of Christ, when he said: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God." It was on this occasion that our Lord gave His chief Apostle the name "Peter," and declared that he was the foundation stone of His Church: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona (Simon, son of John), because flesh and blood have not revealed it to thee, but My Father Who is in Heaven. And I say to thee, that thou art Peter (Rock), and upon this Rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it" (St. Matt. xvi. 16-18).

We see here another instance of two names; the Apostle's name was Simon, and our Lord gave him the name "Peter," meaning "Rock." This important event in the Public Life of Christ is followed almost immediately by the Transfiguration

(St. Matt. xvii. 1-9), and then the second half of the *Gospel* begins in which everything leads up to the Sacred Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord.

### Parables

As it will be necessary from now on to speak many times of our Lord's Parables, it may be well to devote a few words to the subject of Parables in general. "Parable" comes from a Greek word which means, literally, "to cast before"; later it came to mean "to compare." The word occurs forty-eight times in the three Synoptics; sometimes, especially in St. Luke, we find instead the word "similitude": "And He spoke a similitude to them" (St. Luke v. 36). In the *Gospels* the Parable is usually a developed comparison. Some, like that of *The Prodigal Son*, are quite long. Nowhere, outside of the *Gospels*, do we find Parables that compare with those of our Lord. There are but a few instances of Parables in the Old Testament. There are none in any part of the New Testament, outside of the *Gospels*, which means that the Apostles did not attempt to imitate this manner of teaching used so many times by our Lord. Nor do the *Apocryphal Gospels*, which we mentioned on page 12, contain Parables. However, we do find some attempt at this form of moral teaching in the Rabbinical writings of the First Century of the Christian Era.

Our Lord's Parables, then, stand in a class apart. They bear the stamp of Divinity. It is a form of teaching well suited to the Oriental mind, which was fond of clothing ideas in figurative language. Our Lord took all His Parables from the life of the people among whom He lived. Sometimes they were taken from the institutions and customs of *social life*, as wedding feasts and banquets; sometimes they were taken from the customs of *domestic family life*, as when Christ spoke of the leaven and the lost coin; some are taken from the *pastoral* and *agricultural* customs of the country, or from the life of *fishermen*, as when they use the sower and the seed, the mus-

tard seed, the fish net dropped into the sea. Practically all the Parables deal, in one way or another, with the Kingdom of God.

The Parables are never trivial, although they deal with ordinary things; they are always dignified and they are always interesting. They tell a story which holds our attention, and in most cases the lesson of that story is quite evident. There are some instances, as you remember from the Sunday *Gospels*, where our Lord found it necessary to explain a Parable, and the Evangelist has added this explanation. An instance of this is the Parable of *The Sower and the Seed*, which we find in all three *Synoptics* (see St. Matt. xiii. 3-23); another instance is the Parable of *The Wheat and the Cockle*, which we find only in St. Matthew (xiii. 24-30, 36-43).

Some of the Parables do contain hidden meanings and, in a few, notably the Parable of *The Unjust Steward*, we need a careful guide and a knowledge of ancient customs before we can fully understand the lesson our Lord intended to teach. Let us remember that we live nearly 2,000 years after Christ and that our habits of life differ greatly from those of the people of Palestine of that age so long ago. What our Lord said, we may be sure was understood by those who heard Him, especially His own Apostles, and these were the first Bishops of the Church. Christ gave to this Church the commission to teach in His Name and with His authority until the end of time.

### **Plan of the First Gospel**

Looking at the *First Gospel* again, we notice that it may be divided into six parts: the first deals with the Birth and Infancy of Christ, and the beginning of His Public Ministry, and it is from these introductory chapters of St. Matthew that the Church takes the *Gospels* for the Masses of the Christmas Season, spoken of before. The other five parts of the *Gospel* are all written according to a definite plan in which we find, first, some verbal Teachings of Christ, followed usually by a series of Miracles. We shall see how this plan is worked out

in the following outline of the contents of each division of the Gospel:

1. The geneology of Christ, His Birth, the Adoration of the Magi, and the Killing of the Holy Innocents; the Preaching of St. John the Baptist; the Baptism of Christ, and the Fast in the Desert (Chapters i-iv).

2. The Sermon on the Mount (filling three chapters), followed by a series of Miracles recorded in two chapters:

The cure of a leper,  
The cure of the Centurion's servant,  
The cure of Peter's wife's mother,  
The calming of the Tempest,  
The casting out of evil spirits from those possessed,  
The cure of the man sick of palsy,  
The raising to life of the Ruler's daughter,  
The cure of the woman suffering from an issue of blood,  
The restoration of sight to two blind men,  
The cure of a dumb man.

(Chapters v-ix).

3. Instructions to the Apostles; answer to the disciples of St. John the Baptist; controversy with the Pharisees regarding Miracles on the Sabbath, and Christ's defense of His Miracles (Chapters x-xii).

4. Parables of the Kingdom of Heaven:

The Sower,  
The Good Seed and the Cockle,  
The Grain of Mustard Seed,  
The Leaven,  
The Pearl of Great Price,  
The Net Cast Into the Sea.

(Chapter xiii).

These are followed by another series of great Miracles:

The feeding of the multitude of 5,000,  
 Christ walks upon the sea,  
 The healing of many that were diseased,  
 The cure of the daughter of the Woman of Canaan,  
 Many miracles of healing,  
 The feeding of the multitude of 4,000.

(Chapters xiv, xv).

Then comes the climax we spoke of before, which brings us to the middle point of the Gospel (Chapters xvi, xvii).

5. Further teachings on Christian virtues, and more Parables:

Humility,  
 Avoiding Scandal,  
 The Parable of the Lost Sheep,  
 The Parable of the Merciless Servant,  
 Christ's Teaching on Marriage,  
 The Rich Young Man,  
 The Parable of the Vineyard.

These teachings are followed by an account of our Lord's journey to Jerusalem, where He restores sight to two blind men. Next comes Palm Sunday, with more Miracles in the Temple after our Lord's arrival there, and on the following day there is the Miracle of the Fig Tree (Chapters xviii-xxi. 22).

6. The final teachings of Jesus in Holy Week:

Arguments with Jewish leaders,  
 The Parable of the Householder and the Vineyard,  
 The Parable of the Marriage Feast,  
 The question of Tribute to Caesar,  
 The questions about Marriage,  
 Questions about the Great Commandment,  
 The long discourse condemning the Scribes and Pharisees and foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world.

(Chapters xxi. 23—xxiv. 51).

This is followed by two more Parables:

The Wise and the Foolish Virgins,  
The Talents.

After which comes a description of the Last Judgment.

(Chapter xxv).

St. Matthew then devotes the last three chapters to the History of the Sacred Passion and the Resurrection (Chapters xxvi-xxviii).

We can see from this summary that St. Matthew has not written a record of our Lord's life in strictly chronological order; he has preferred to group events and teachings to suit his purpose—namely, to point out to the Jewish people, whom he was particularly addressing, that the Teachings of Christ and His many Miracles prove that He was the Messiah promised to them in their own Scriptures. That is why we find St. Matthew gathering together many sayings of our Lord, giving His Teachings on many different subjects necessary for our salvation, and then grouping together a number of Miracles which proved the Divinity of the Teacher.

Read this *Gospel* for yourself, using the summary here to guide you. Notice that most of the events recorded by St. Matthew, except the Birth of Christ and the happenings of Holy Week, occurred in Galilee and other places in the northern part of Palestine. This will be true of the *Second Gospel*, also, and to a certain extent, of the *Gospel According to St. Luke*, but when we come to the *Fourth Gospel*, we shall find that most of the events recorded there occurred in Judea.

## CHAPTER V

### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK

#### St. Mark, the Evangelist

**E**ARLY in the second century, a Christian writer named Papias wrote: "Mark, who had been Peter's interpreter, wrote down exactly, but without placing it in order, all that he could remember of the words and actions of the Lord."

We know more about St. Mark than we do about St. Matthew. Very probably he is the young man mentioned in his own *Gospel*, and nowhere else (St. Mark xiv. 51, 52), who came to the Garden of Gethsemane and then fled when the soldiers tried to apprehend him. Nearly all authorities, ancient and modern, identify Mark who wrote this *Second Gospel* with John Mark, who is mentioned several times in the *Acts of the Apostles* and in the *Epistles* of St. Paul. With this granted, then, we know that his mother's name was Mary and that she had a house in Jerusalem to which St. Peter went after he had been delivered from prison by an Angel (Acts xii. 12-17). He was a cousin of St. Barnabas, St. Paul's first companion. St. Mark was a disciple of St. Peter (not of our Lord) and acted as secretary for St. Peter. He traveled with SS. Paul and Barnabas on their first Missionary Journey; here and in a few other places, he is called simply "John." He left St. Paul and his cousin during this journey and returned to Jerusalem, and St. Paul held this to be a weakness and would not take him with him on his next journey; but later he writes of him very kindly in three of his *Epistles* (Col. iv. 10; Philem. i. 24; 2 Tim. iv. 11). In this last *Epistle* St. Paul instructs Timothy: "Take Mark and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry."

Of the later life of St. Mark we have no great certainty. Tradition says that he went to Egypt and founded the Church

of Alexandria, where he was bishop for twenty years. His relics are at St. Mark's, Venice. His Feast Day is April 25th, which is also a Rogation Day, though there is no connection between these two.

The *Second Gospel* was written in Greek, very probably in Rome, for the Christian Church in and near the Eternal City. It was certainly written at a very early date.

### **St. Mark and St. Peter**

That St. Mark was closely associated with St. Peter seems evident from the prominence given to Peter's name in several instances, especially where corresponding passages in the other *Gospels* do not single him out. We may note the following:

“And Simon and they that were with him followed after Him” (St. Mark i. 36).

“And Peter remembering, said to Him: ‘Rabbi, behold the fig tree, which Thou didst curse is withered’” (St. Mark xi. 21).

“And as He sat on the Mount of Olivet, over against the Temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked Him apart: ‘Tell us when shall these things be?’” (St. Mark xiii. 3, 4).

“Go, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee; there you shall see Him as He told you” (St. Mark xvi. 7).

### **Characteristics of the Second Gospel**

St. Mark's is the shortest of the *Gospels*. Whereas St. Matthew's has twenty-eight Chapters, St. Mark's has only sixteen; St. Luke's has twenty-four and St. John's twenty-one. St. Mark gives us chiefly the *works* of Christ. There are no long discourses, but he supplies us with many interesting details omitted in the other *Gospels*. Let us point out some of these:

He quotes St. John the Baptist as having said of Christ:



“There cometh after me One mightier than I, the latchet of Whose shoes I am not worthy to *stoop down* and loose” (St. Mark i. 7).

After recording how our Lord called the Apostles St. James and St. John, St. Mark says: “And leaving their father Zebedee in the ship *with his hired men*, they followed Him” (St. Mark i. 20).

Recording the cure of the leper, whom Christ instructed to show himself to the priest and to tell no one, St. Mark says that it was the “*high priest*,” and adds that the cured man “being gone out, began to publish and to blaze abroad the word so that He (Christ) could not openly go into the city, but was without in desert places; and they flocked to Him from all sides” (St. Mark i. 41-45).

Both St. Mark and St. Luke give us the incident of the crowded house where the friends of a sick man let him down through the roof. In describing how crowded the house was, St. Mark says: “There was no room; *no, not even at the door*” (St. Mark ii. 2).

The three *Synoptic Gospels* record the healing by our Lord of a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. St. Mark alone tells us that after this, “a great multitude followed Him, from Galilee and Judea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumea, and from beyond the Jordan. And they about Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, hearing the things which He did, came to Him” (St. Mark iii. 7, 8).

In recording the selection of the Twelve Apostles, St. Mark is very precise. He writes: “And going up into a mountain, He called unto Him whom He would Himself: and they came to Him. And He made that twelve should be with Him, and that He might send them to preach. And He gave them power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils” (St. Mark iii. 13-15).

In this same place, listing James and John his brother among the Twelve Apostles, St. Mark reports that our Lord named them “Boanerges, which is, The Sons of Thunder” (St. Mark iii. 17).

In describing the Miracle of the Calming of the Tempest, while the other *Gospels* merely record the fact that our Lord was asleep, St. Mark says: "And He was in the *hinder part* of the ship, *sleeping upon a pillow*" (St. Mark iv. 38).

In recording the Miracle of the Raising of the Daughter of Jairus, St. Mark gives us the Aramaic words. He writes: "And taking the damsel by the hand, He (Christ) saith to her: '*Talitha cumi*,' which is, being interpreted, 'Damsel, I say to thee, arise'" (St. Mark v. 41).

In writing of the Feeding of the Multitude, St. Mark specifies that the Lord made the people sit down upon the "*green grass*," and adds that "they sat down *in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties*" (St. Mark vi. 39, 40).

Describing the Transfiguration of our Lord, St. Mark says: "And His garments became shining and exceeding white as snow, *so as no fuller upon earth can make white*" (St. Mark ix. 2).

In speaking of the Blind Man outside of Jericho, St. Mark tells us that his name was "Bartimeus, the son of Timeus" (St. Mark x. 46). He gives us another Miracle of the healing of a blind man at Bethsaida (St. Mark viii. 22-26), which is contained in no other *Gospel*. This is the only instance in which St. Mark records a Miracle not mentioned in one or more of the other *Gospels*.

The man who helped our Lord carry His Cross is simply called "Simon of Cyrene," by St. Luke, and St. Matthew says: "A man of Cyrene, named Simon." St. Mark, however, adds two further details. He writes: "And they forced one Simon a Cyrenian who passed by, *coming out of the country, the father of Alexander and of Rufus*, to take up His Cross" (St. Mark xv. 21). St. Paul seems to refer to this "Rufus" in his *Epistle to the Romans* (xvi. 13), where he says, "Salute Rufus, elect in the Lord, and his mother and mine."

Of Joseph of Arimathea, St. Matthew says: "He went to Pilate and *asked* the Body of Jesus," and St. Luke says: "This man went to Pilate and *begged* the Body of Jesus." St. Mark

says that Joseph of Arimathea "*went in boldly* to Pilate, and begged the Body of Jesus" (St. Mark xv. 43).

We see, then, that while this *Second Gospel* is the shortest of the Four, we are indebted to it for many graphic details concerning our Lord and other persons connected with His history, as well as for many details concerning the events in which He moved during the few years of His Public Ministry. St. Mark's purpose was to paint a picture in vivid words, showing the wonderful works of Jesus Christ and demonstrating that He was the Messiah, the Son of God. Notice how simple and strong is St. Mark's report of the question put to Christ by the High Priest, and our Lord's answer:

"Again the High Priest asked Him, and said to Him: 'Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed God?' And Jesus said to him: 'I am. And you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the Power of God, and coming with the clouds of heaven'" (St. Mark xiv. 61, 62).

There is no clearer statement anywhere in the New Testament that Christ our Blessed Lord claimed to be God.

### **A Summary of the Second Gospel**

Introduction: The ministry of St. John the Baptist, the Baptism of Jesus, and, very briefly, the Temptation in the Desert (St. Mark i. 1-13).

1. Christ's Public Ministry in Galilee. Some of the Miracles which we saw recorded by St. Matthew:

Healing of a Leper,  
Healing of a Paralytic,  
Healing of a withered hand,  
Healing of the blind and dumb Demoniac.

(St. Mark i. 14—iii. 35).

2. By the Sea of Galilee: Eight Parables recorded by St. Matthew, more briefly recorded in this Gospel; then some Miracles:

Stilling the Tempest,  
Other Miracles, especially the Raising of the  
Daughter of Jairus to Life,  
Feeding of the Multitude, as in St. Matthew.  
(St. Mark iv-vii).

3. Second Feeding of the Multitude. Profession of St. Peter's Faith, as in St. Matthew, but very briefly, followed by the Transfiguration and a Miracle of Healing. (St. Mark viii, ix).
4. In Jerusalem:  
The Teaching on Marriage,  
Christ Blesses the Children,  
The Apostles James and John ask special places in Christ's Kingdom,  
The Curing of a Blind Man. (St. Mark x).
5. Palm Sunday and the events of Holy Week, similar to St. Matthew, with the addition of the incident of the Widow's Mite. (St. Mark xi-xiii).
6. Last Supper, Passion and Resurrection. (St. Mark xiv-xvi).

## CHAPTER VI

### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE

#### Life of St. Luke

**T**HE *Third Gospel* and the *Acts of the Apostles* were written by St. Luke. The information about St. Luke in the New Testament is very meager. He was not one of the Twelve Apostles, and though some think he was one of the seventy-two Disciples of our Lord—since his *Gospel* alone mentions them—it seems much more likely that he was a Gentile and that he never knew or even saw our Blessed Lord.

St. Luke was probably born in Antioch, the Capital of Syria. He was an educated man and a physician, and it is likely that he studied medicine at St. Paul's native city of Tarsus, in Cilicia, on the north shore of the Mediterranean Sea. He was converted to Christianity through the preaching of St. Peter or St. Paul, probably the latter. He attached himself to St. Paul and traveled with him on some of his missionary journeys and on the final journey to Rome, when St. Paul was being taken there as a prisoner. Nothing is known of him with certainty after the Roman captivity of St. Paul.

There is a tradition that St. Luke was an artist and there are pictures which are supposed to have been painted by him. Unfortunately, historic evidence seems to prove that these pictures cannot be older than the sixth century of our era. However, St. Luke is the patron of physicians and of artists. His emblems are: A book, an ox, a brush and a palette. His Feast is observed on October 18th. His relics are venerated at the Church of St. Justina in Padua, Italy.

Three times in the *Epistles* of St. Paul we find the name of this Evangelist:

“Luke, the most dear physician, saluteth you,” St. Paul wrote to the Colossians (Col. iv. 14).

“There salute thee Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in

Christ Jesus . . . and Luke my fellow-laborer" (Philem. i. 23, 24).

And in the last *Epistle* which St. Paul wrote, in the same verse where we find the reference to St. Mark (see page 31) the Apostle says: "Only Luke is with me" (2 Tim. iv. 11).

There are some portions of the *Acts of the Apostles* which are written in the first person plural, so we know that at these times St. Luke was actually an eyewitness to the events which he relates and had a part in them. It is very probable that St. Luke wrote his *Gospel* at Caesarea, on the Mediterranean coast of Samaria, a different city from that mentioned as the scene of St. Peter's Confession (see page 20), while St. Paul was a prisoner there, about the year 60 A. D., or a few years later during Paul's imprisonment in Rome; it was certainly during this latter time that he wrote the *Acts of the Apostles*.

### **The Third Gospel**

"The most beautiful book that has ever been written," was the judgment of the French Agnostic, Ernest Renan, on the *Third Gospel*. Students of Greek point out the rich vocabulary of St. Luke; there are over three hundred words in this *Gospel* not found elsewhere in the New Testament. It is the most "literary" of the *Gospels* and the best arranged. In the beautiful Prologue, St. Luke says that he has "diligently attained to all things from the beginning," and that he is going to write them "in order" (St. Luke i. 3). For this reason, it is in marked contrast to St. Matthew, who, as we have seen, grouped teachings and Miracles, with little regard to chronological sequence.

### **The Joyful Mysteries**

St. Luke goes back more than a year before the Birth of Christ, to begin his *Gospel* with the account of the Angelic announcement to the priest Zachary that a son would be born

to him and that he should name the child "John." Then follows the familiar history of the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity of our Lord, the Presentation in the Temple, and the Finding of the twelve-year-old Boy Jesus in the Temple—all the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary come from the *Gospel According to St. Luke*. The *Gospels* of the First and Second Masses of Christmas are from the Second Chapter of St. Luke, as are those of the Sunday within the Octave of Christmas, the Feast of the Circumcision, Sunday within the Octave of the Epiphany, and the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin, February 2nd. In addition to this, *St. Luke's Gospel* has been assigned by the Church for fifteen Sundays throughout the year.

There is an old tradition that St. Luke received his information from our Blessed Lady herself, and, indeed, it is hard to see who else could have supplied him with the material in the first two chapters of his *Gospel*.

It is only St. Matthew and St. Luke who treat of the Birth and Infancy of Christ, and each supplies different details, so that with the two together we have a very complete picture of all the events surrounding the Birth of our Blessed Lord.

From St. Luke's account the Church takes the three well-known Canticles, the *Magnificat*, the *Benedictus*, and the *Nunc Dimittis*. The *Magnificat* is that sublime Hymn of Praise spoken by our Blessed Lady when she visited St. Elizabeth (St. Luke i. 46-55); it is part of *Vespers* in the Divine Office. The *Benedictus* is the inspired prophecy of St. Zachary, father of St. John the Baptist, spoken when his power of speech was restored to him (St. Luke i. 67-79). This is part of *Lauds* in the Divine Office, and part of the *Absolution* following a Funeral Mass. The *Nunc Dimittis* was spoken by the holy old man Simeon, as he took the Divine Infant into his arms, when His Blessed Mother and St. Joseph brought Him to the Temple for Mary's legal Purification forty days after the Birth of Jesus (St. Luke ii. 28-32). It is a short Cantic which the Church incorporates into *Compline*, the Night

Prayer of the Divine Office. Note also that the first part of the *Hail Mary* comes from this *Gospel*; for in this prayer we repeat the words of the Angel Gabriel and of St. Elizabeth addressed to the Blessed Virgin (St. Luke i. 28, 42). We owe much, therefore, to these first two chapters of the *Third Gospel*, because we find this material nowhere else in the *Gospels*.

St. Luke calls attention to important facts of profane history which coincide with the sacred events he sets down in his *Gospel*. For example, he points out that Herod was King of the Jews when the Annunciation took place; that the Birth of Christ was at the time of the Census of Cyrenus; and that John the Baptist began his mission "in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar" (St. Luke iii. 1). It is only in this *Gospel* that another Herod is brought into the history of our Lord's Passion (St. Luke xxiii. 7-12).

### Characteristics

This *Third Gospel* has some striking characteristics and contains considerable material not found in the earlier *Gospels* which we have already studied. One characteristic is the prominence given to women. When we recall the inferior place held by women both in Jewish and in Greek life, this aspect of the *Gospel According to St. Luke* becomes the more remarkable. In the first two chapters, besides the important place necessarily given to the Blessed Virgin and her cousin, St. Elizabeth, there is brought into the narrative the Prophetess Anna, who spoke of Jesus to all who looked for the Redemption of Israel (St. Luke ii. 36-38).

Later in his *Gospel* St. Luke relates the touching story of the Widow of Naim, whose only son was restored to life by Christ our Lord (St. Luke vii. 11-15); no other *Gospel* records this Miracle. Again, it is St. Luke alone who speaks of the holy women who helped our Lord during His Public Ministry (St. Luke viii. 2, 3). He alone of the Evangelists speaks of our Lord's visit to the house of the sisters, Martha and Mary, and reports the very human complaint of Martha that



her sister failed to help her with the domestic duties (St. Luke x. 38-42). St. John, too, speaks of these sisters, and their brother, Lazarus, but records only the more important fact that Jesus restores Lazarus to life after he had been dead for four days (St. John xi. 1-44).

Among the many Miracles of Christ, St. Luke alone records the cure of a woman who had been crippled for eighteen years (St. Luke xiii. 11-13). And among the many Parables we find two in which women are the characters used. St. Matthew had recorded the beautiful Parable of the Lost Sheep (St. Matt. xviii. 12-14); St. Luke repeats this and then adds the Parable of the Woman and the Lost Coin, called a groat<sup>1</sup> (St. Luke xv. 8-10). It is to St. Luke that we must go for the other Parable of the Importunate Widow and the Judge (St. Luke xviii. 1-8). We would naturally expect that any special prominence given to women by the earlier *Gospels* would be duplicated by St. Luke, and therefore we are not surprised to find our Lord's commendation of the Widow who put her meager offering into the Temple treasury (see St. Mark xii. 41), repeated in more detail in the *Third Gospel* (St. Luke xxi. 1-4).

However, the most beautiful instance of this characteristic of St. Luke we find in the History of the Sacred Passion. He alone records that Christ our Lord, on His way to Calvary, stopped on the road to speak to some Women of Jerusalem. The incident forms the Eighth Station in our Way of the Cross, but usually our prayer books give only a few of the words our Lord spoke on that occasion. Read the whole incident for yourself (St. Luke xxiii. 27-31).

### Other Characteristics

As we noted in the beginning of this Chapter, St. Luke was a Gentile. He wrote his *Gospel* for Gentiles. This made him considerate of the feelings of the people who were not of the Jewish race and religion. When our Blessed Lord spoke

<sup>1</sup> The groat was an old English silver coin worth fourpence.

of the obligation of universal charity, He asked a series of questions, as St. Matthew reports (St. Matt. v. 46, 47): "For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? Do not even the publicans this? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? Do not also the heathens this?" St. Luke changes the wording, keeping the same sense, of course: "And if you love them that love you, what thanks are to you? For sinners also love those that love them. And if you do good to them that do good to you, what thanks are to you? For sinners also do this" (St. Luke vi. 32, 33). You see he has not mentioned publicans or heathens.

In spite of his interest in Gentiles, and the prominence given to women in his *Gospel*, St. Luke does not record a Miracle performed to help a Gentile woman, obviously because our Blessed Lord had tested the faith of this woman by using language that must have seemed harsh. Both St. Matthew and St. Mark record the happening (St. Matt. xv. 21-28; St. Mark vii. 24-30). The late Mother Loyola made a beautiful meditation on the incident in *Welcome*, her lovely book for Holy Communion.

### The Mercy of God

St. Luke emphasizes the Divine Mercy. St. Matthew and St. John apply the Prophecy of Isaias to St. John the Baptist: "A voice of one crying in the wilderness." St. Luke does, too, but he quotes a longer passage from Isaias, using the Greek Version (the *Septuagint*, which he always uses), concluding with the words: "And all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (St. Luke iii. 4-6; Isaias xl. 3-5). He gives us in considerable detail the incident of "the woman that was in the city, a sinner," who bathed the feet of the Lord, and records Christ's defense of her and His grant of pardon for her sins (St. Luke vii. 36-50). We find this episode nowhere else though St. John refers to it (see St. John xi. 2).

We owe our knowledge of another *Gospel* character to St.

Luke, for he alone has preserved for us the account of our Lord's meeting with the rich publican named Zacheus, "chief of the publicans" in Jericho. This man entertained Jesus in his home, and the Lord said, "This day is salvation come to this house . . . for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (St. Luke xix. 1-10). This incident forms the *Gospel* for the Mass for the Dedication of a Church.

The consoling story of the promise of Paradise to the Penitent Thief on Calvary is told us only by St. Luke; it makes the Second of the Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross. He records also the First and Sixth of these Words: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do!" (St. Luke xxiii. 34), and "Father, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit!" (St. Luke xxiii. 46). These occur nowhere else.

### Parables Found Only in the Third Gospel

The first two *Gospels* barely mention the fact that our Lord traveled through any of the territory east of the River Jordan. But St. Luke gives us a fairly long account of the Teaching and Ministry of Christ while He and His followers journeyed for the last time from Galilee to Jerusalem by way of the country east of the Jordan, because the Samaritans would not let them pass through their country (St. Luke ix. 51-53). We are indebted to St. Luke for the account of eleven Parables<sup>2</sup> that we do not find in any other *Gospel*, and these were spoken by our Lord while He was in Perea and the country of the Decapolis. Best known among these Parables are the following:

- The Good Samaritan (St. Luke x. 30-37).
- The Prodigal Son (*ibid.* xv. 11-32).
- The Unjust Steward (*ibid.* xvi. 1-9).
- The Rich Man and Lazarus (*ibid.* xvi. 19-31).
- The Pharisee and the Publican (*ibid.* xviii. 9-14).

<sup>2</sup> If we count three Parables found in St. Matthew differently worded, and then some brief illustrations, we can consider that sixteen or seventeen Parables are found only in St. Luke.

### Miracles Found Only in the Third Gospel

Six Miracles performed by our Blessed Lord are recorded only in this *Gospel According to St. Luke*; two of them have been already mentioned but we shall list all six of them for convenience:

The Miraculous Draught of Fishes (St. Luke v. 1-10).

The Son of the Widow of Naim (*ibid.* vii. 11-16).

The Woman Crippled Eighteen Years (*ibid.* xiii. 11-13).

The Man With Dropsy (*ibid.* xiv. 1-6).

The Ten Lepers (*ibid.* xvii. 11-19).

Cure of Malchus in Gethsemane (*ibid.* xxii. 49-51).

### Other Important Points Concerning the Third Gospel

We said at the beginning of this chapter that St. Luke was a physician. This is borne out by the text of his *Gospel*. While all the *Gospels* speak of Christ's miraculous cures, only St. Luke uses the words "heal" and "healing" and these words are found nowhere else in the New Testament. He alone tells us of our Lord's Sweat of Blood in the Garden (St. Luke xxii. 44), and he alone records that saying of Christ our Lord, "Physician, heal thyself" (St. Luke iv. 23).

It was pointed out earlier that St. Luke was a companion of St. Paul. There is a close similarity between some passages in the *Epistles* of St. Paul and some in this *Gospel*, when they are dealing with the same teachings of Christ; especially is this true of the Last Supper (compare St. Luke xxii. 14-23, and 1 Cor. x. 16, xi. 23-29). Christ appeared to St. Peter on the day of His Resurrection according to St. Luke (xxiv. 34), though no other *Gospel* mentions this; but St. Paul mentions it (1 Cor. xv. 5).

St. Luke alone mentions another appearance of Christ on Easter: that to the unknown Disciples on the road to Emmaus, outside Jerusalem (St. Luke xxiv. 13-35), and you see from the reference that he speaks of this event in some detail.

### Summary of the Gospel

1. Before and After the Birth of Christ,  
The Five Joyful Mysteries.  
(St. Luke i and ii).
1. St. John the Baptist. Temptation in the Desert.  
(*Ibid.* iii. 1—iv. 13).
3. Teachings and Miracles in Galilee,  
Founding of the Church.  
(*Ibid.* iv. 14—ix. 50).
4. The Perea Ministry, Parables.  
(*Ibid.* ix. 51—xix. 28).
5. Jerusalem; Last Teachings.  
(*Ibid.* xix. 29—xxi. 38).
6. Passion, Resurrection and Ascension.  
(*Ibid.* xxii-xxiv).

## CHAPTER VII

### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN

#### St. John, the Beloved Disciple

**T**HE *Fourth Gospel* was written by St. John, the disciple "whom Jesus loved" (St. John xiii. 23). John and his older brother James<sup>3</sup> were the sons of Zebedee, a fisherman on the Lake of Galilee. St. Matthew tells us how the Lord summoned them: "He (Christ) saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and He called them. And they forthwith left their nets and father, and followed Him" (St. Matt. iv. 21, 22). These two, with Peter, were the Apostles specially favored by our Lord; only they entered into the house where the daughter of Jairus lay dead, and witnessed the miracle of her restoration to life (St. Luke viii. 51); only they were present at the Transfiguration (St. Matt. xvii. 1), and during Christ's Agony in the Garden (St. Matt. xxvi. 37). St. John alone was faithful throughout the Sacred Passion and stood with our Blessed Lady at the foot of the Cross. He tells us in his own *Gospel* how Jesus commended His Blessed Mother to his care (St. John xix. 25-27).

After the Ascension of Christ, St. John remained the companion of St. Peter during the early days of the Apostolic ministry, and St. Paul referred to them as "pillars" of the Church (Gal. ii. 9). St. John traveled through Asia Minor and established several churches. Then, during a persecution, he was exiled to the Island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, where he wrote the Book that stands last in the New Testament, *The Apocalypse*. He returned to Ephesus later where he wrote the *Fourth Gospel* and three short *Epistles*.

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<sup>3</sup> St. James the Greater, slain by order of King Herod Agrippa in Jerusalem (Acts xii. 2).

St. John probably died at Ephesus, a very old man, near the end of the first century. His Feast is observed December 27th. Another Feast, May 6th, called "St. John Before the Latin Gate," commemorates the attempt made to kill him by throwing him into a vat of burning oil, from which he escaped unharmed. His emblems are: an eagle, a chalice, a kettle, a suit of armor.

### **Author of the Fourth Gospel**

That St. John wrote this *Gospel* near the end of his long life, and wrote it in Ephesus, an important city that was the Capital of Proconsular Asia, is the testimony of very early Christian writers. St. Irenaeus, who died at the end of the second century, wrote between the years 177-188 A. D., that "John, the disciple of the Lord, who leaned upon His breast, himself also published the *Gospel* while he was dwelling at Ephesus in Asia." Now this Irenaeus knew St. Polycarp who lived to be nearly ninety years of age and who knew St. John. An English writer, not a Catholic, discussing this question, said he saw no reason why the Churches of Asia Minor should not have been just as sure that the Apostle John had once lived among them, as the English are that Oliver Goldsmith once lived in London (Drummond, *Character and Authorship of the Fourth Gospel*).

### **Characteristics of the Fourth Gospel**

When you read the *Fourth Gospel* you will notice at once how it differs from the other three *Gospels* we have already studied. You find many long discourses by our Blessed Lord, and you find several Miracles that were not recorded in any of the other *Gospels*. In fact nearly all the material of this *Fourth Gospel* is new: St. John wrote for that reason, to supply a record of important things Christ said and did during His Public Life that had not yet been written down. As he was the last of the Evangelists to write, and as he knew what

the others had written, he planned to record what had been left out of the earlier Gospels. He tells us quite plainly, however, that all the records are incomplete: "Many other signs also did Jesus in the sight of His disciples which are not written in this book." And a little later he says again: "There are also many other things which Jesus did, which, if they were written, every one the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written" (St. John xx. 30, xxi. 25).

### Purpose of the Gospel

But there was another and more important reason why St. John undertook to write a *Gospel*: "These things are written," he says, "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, you may have life in His Name" (St. John xx. 31). St. John begins the *Gospel* with a proclamation of the Divinity of Christ. It is these first fourteen verses of the *Gospel According to St. John* that the Church uses as the *Last Gospel* of Holy Mass, unless some special *Gospel* is called for there, as on Feast Days in Lent.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we"—*i. e.*, John and the other Apostles—"saw His glory, the glory, as it were, of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (St. John i. 1, 14).

This is the Apostle's thesis. He uses "WORD" to designate Christ in *The Apocalypse* (xix. 13), and in the introduction to his *First Epistle* (1 Epistle i. 1). The Greek term, *logos*, which is translated in our Bible by *word*, really means more than that; it means the thought which is expressed by the word, and sometimes it means *reason*. Something like it was used by writers in the Old Testament, so St. John was using an expression that was familiar to his first readers. We are familiar with it because we hear it so often, but perhaps it has not always been clear to us just what was meant.



Many of the chapters in the *Fourth Gospel* are long; one incident and the discourse of Christ in connection with the incident often take up a whole chapter. In the case of our Lord's Discourse after the Last Supper, St. John devotes three chapters to it. All through the *Gospel*, St. John makes clear to us the Divine claims of his Master and shows how our Lord's Miracles prove these claims. It was pointed out before (page 30), that the majority of the events recorded in this *Gospel* occurred in Judea, in or near Jerusalem. In the early chapters, however, there are important happenings in Galilee and in Samaria.

### **Summary of the Fourth Gospel**

After the Prologue mentioned above, comprising the first fourteen verses of the first chapter, St. John proceeds to give us the account of the work of St. John the Baptist, the calling of the first Apostles by Christ and then the Public Ministry, filling eleven chapters out of a total of twenty-one chapters; the events of Holy Week start with the beginning of Chapter xii., so you see that St. John devotes nearly half of the entire *Gospel* to the events that we commemorate in Holy Week and at Easter.

#### **Public Ministry**

We may divide the first half of the *Gospel* into two parts:

(a) The Public Ministry begins with the Miracle at the Wedding Feast at Cana in Galilee; then our Lord returns to Jerusalem and casts out from the Temple the sellers and the money changers; Nicodemus comes to Jesus for an interview and Christ speaks of the necessity of Baptism; soon after He journeys up to Samaria and talks at length with a Samaritan woman; He continues into Galilee and heals the son of the ruler of Capharnaum, Chapters i-iv.

(b) The conflict begins with the Jewish authorities over the miraculous healing of a crippled man in Jerusalem on the Sabbath. Christ goes again into Galilee and miraculously

feeds the multitude; this is the only one of our Lord's Miracles which is recorded in all *Four Gospels*; St. John reports it evidently because it led up to that beautiful discourse on the Bread of Life, which was the Promise of the Holy Eucharist. Jesus returns to Jerusalem and the scenes of all the rest of the events in the *Fourth Gospel* are in or near Jerusalem. First there is the teaching of our Lord on the occasion of the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, followed by the incident of the woman accused of adultery; then Christ gives sight to a man born blind. He performs this Miracle on the Sabbath, and a bitter controversy results. Then comes the Discourse on the Good Shepherd and the Miracle of the Raising of Lazarus. The result of this Miracle is worth noting:

“The chief priests therefore and the Pharisees gathered a Council and said: ‘What do we for this Man doth many miracles? And if we let Him alone so, all will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away our place and nation’” (St. John xi. 47, 48).

### **Holy Week and Easter**

The Public Ministry is thus brought to a dramatic end by this great Miracle which the enemies of Jesus use as an argument to destroy Him, and we are led up to the events that immediately precede the Sacred Passion. This portion of the *Gospel* may be divided into four parts as follows:

(a) Jesus is Glorified, (1) He is anointed with precious ointment, (2) He enters Jerusalem in triumph on Palm Sunday, and (3) a Voice speaks from Heaven: “I have both glorified it (Jesus' Name), and will glorify it again” (Chapter xii).

(b) The Last Supper with the Discourse and Prayer of Jesus (Chapters xiii-xvii).

(c) The Passion (Chapters xviii, xix).

(d) The Resurrection. Jesus gives to His Apostles the power to pardon sin (Chapters xx, xxi).

In this second part of the *Fourth Gospel* St. John treats of subjects that are contained in the other three *Gospels*, but if you compare his account of these events with those in the *Synoptic Gospels*, you will notice that he treats them differently. St. John does not mention the Institution of the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper, because it has been completely covered in the other three *Gospels* and in St. Paul's *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, but he does give us a most beautiful Discourse of Jesus to His Apostles and His Prayer for them, and from this portion of the *Gospel According to St. John* are taken the Sunday *Gospels* for several Sundays before Pentecost, because it was on the night of the Last Supper that our Lord told His Apostles about the coming of the Holy Spirit.

So in the History of the Passion according to St. John we find many different details not mentioned in the other *Gospels*; for example, we go to this *Gospel* for three of the Seven Last Words of Christ. You remember we noticed that St. Luke supplied us the First, Second and Sixth of these Words. St. John gives us the Third: "Woman, behold thy Son; Behold Thy Mother" (St. John xix. 26, 27). He also gives us the Fifth Word: "I thirst," and the Seventh: "It is consummated" (St. John xix. 28, 30).<sup>4</sup>

While it is clear from the first three *Gospels*, as we have seen, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, in the *Fourth Gospel* this teaching of the Divinity of Christ is emphasized in many ways. Some of the most striking texts are gathered here.

St. John says that our Lord knew "that the Father had given Him all things into His hands and that He came from God and goeth to God" (xiii. 3). In His Prayer for His Disciples, our Lord says: "Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son that Thy Son may glorify Thee. As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to all whom

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<sup>4</sup> The Fourth Word: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" is found in the first two Gospels (St. Matt. xxvii. 46; St. Mark xv. 34). Our Lord here was reciting Psalm xxi., which was a prophecy of the Passion (see Psalm xxi. 2).

Thou hast given Him" (xvii. 1, 2). In this same Prayer, our Lord says that He prays for His Disciples because "they have known in very deed that I came out from Thee and they have believed that Thou didst send Me" (xvii. 8). Earlier in this *Gospel*, Jesus says that the Father "hath given all judgment to the Son, that all men may honor the Son, as they honor the Father" (v. 22, 23). In His Discourse on the Bread of Life our Lord says: "This is the will of My Father that sent Me, that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth in Him, may have life everlasting, and I will raise him up in the last day" (vi. 40). "I am not of this world," Christ says of Himself; I am "the Beginning Who also speak unto you" (viii. 23, 25). "Before Abraham was made, I am" (viii. 58). "I am come in the Name of My Father and you receive Me not" (v. 43). "All things whatsoever the Father hath are Mine" (xvi. 15).

St. John records that "the Jews sought the more to kill Him (Jesus), because He did not only break the Sabbath, but also said God was His Father, making Himself equal to God" (v. 18). Jesus prays for His followers "that they all may be one, as Thou Father in Me and I in Thee" (xvii. 21). Jesus said to one of His Apostles, "If any one love Me, he will keep My Word, and My Father will love him and *WE* will come to him, and will make Our abode with him" (xiv. 23). "I and the Father are One" (x. 30).

Appealing to His Miracles, Jesus says: "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not; but if I do, though you will not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me and I in the Father" (x. 37, 38). Jesus said to Thomas, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life" (xiv. 6). He said, "I am the Light of the World" (viii. 12). Jesus said to Martha, the sister of Lazarus, "I am the Resurrection and the Life" (xi. 25).

In these and in many other passages in this wonderful *Gospel*, St. John clearly sets forth the teaching which is the very cornerstone of our Catholic Faith, that Jesus Christ is God made Man.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SPECIAL TOPICS

#### Samaritans

**S**AMARITANS are mentioned several times in the Gospels, and we ought to know who these people are and why there was antagonism between them and the Jews. That there was such antagonism we learn, for example, from the question of the Samaritan woman whom our Lord met by the Well of Jacob; she said to Him: "How dost Thou, being a Jew, ask of me to drink, who am a Samaritan woman?" (St. John iv. 9.) We see it again in the accusation hurled against Jesus by His enemies: "Do not we say well that Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil?" (St. John viii. 48.)

We must go back to the Old Testament to learn the origin of the Samaritans. One of the most terrible disasters in ancient Jewish history was the conquest of the Northern Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians (4 Kings xvii. 1-18). When they destroyed the City of Samaria, they carried off large numbers of the population into Assyria; then the conquerors colonized the land of Samaria with pagans from their own country. These colonists soon picked up part of the Jewish religion and joined it to their own idolatrous superstitions which they had brought with them. This resulted in a mixed religion; as the Assyrians intermarried with the remnants of the Israelites who had been left in Samaria, we find also a mixed race. This was about 700 years before Christ, and even in the time of Christ the people of Samaria were looked upon by the Jews as a mongrel race and as heretics in religion. A Temple was built upon Mount Garizim. We find a reference to this in the words of the Samaritan woman to our Lord: "Our Fathers adored on this Mountain" (St. John iv. 20). This Temple was taken from the Samaritans in 164 B. C. by a

Roman conqueror and consecrated to Jupiter. Thirty years later it was destroyed. Finally King Herod built a new Temple on the same Mountain.

These facts explain the antagonism between the Jews and the Samaritans, and if we keep them in mind we can understand better the force of our Lord's Parable, "The Good Samaritan" (St. Luke x. 30-37).

These people still exist. The bulk of the population was almost annihilated in the Sixth Century of the Christian Era, by the Emperor Justinian, but in a census taken in 1923, one hundred and fifty Samaritans were found living around the foot of Mount Garizim.

### Publicans

Another group of people in Jewish life at the time of our Lord, who were perhaps even more bitterly hated than the Samaritans, were the Publicans. This was the name given to the tax collectors. They were Jews employed by the Romans to collect the taxes from their own people. A glance at the system will show us why these collectors were so universally despised. Rich Roman citizens, either individually or acting in what we would call a Stock Company, bought from the Roman authorities the tax "concession" in the territories which had been conquered by the Romans. Whenever possible, they employed natives of the territory to collect the taxes, and this was true in Palestine. The Publicans were paid by a commission on the taxes they collected, so obviously it was to their advantage to collect as much as possible—even more than the law demanded. If they were unscrupulous, they could easily become "extortioners," as the Pharisee described the Publican in the Parable recorded by St. Luke (xviii. 9-14). We have another reference to this danger in the advice given by St. John the Baptist: "And the Publicans also came to be baptized and said to him: 'Master, what shall we do?' But He said to them: '*Do nothing more than that which is appointed you*'" (St. Luke iii. 12, 13).

Furthermore, the taxes were a terrible burden upon the people. Perhaps we think in these days that we are heavily taxed, but a list of the taxes to which the people of Palestine were subject in our Lord's day will indicate in how many ways the conquered Jewish people were called to support the Roman Government: There was a Capital Tax of two drachmas per person, which was originally a religious tax; there was a general Income Tax, besides a Poll Tax of 1% on total property. This applied to boys and men from fourteen to sixty-five and to girls and women from twelve to sixty-five years of age and even to slaves. Then there was a Land Tax, a tax on grain and cattle to maintain the Roman Army; a tax on fruit trees, fishing boats and nets, and a special tax on jewelry. There was a tax on professions and occupations, which affected butchers, bakers and tanners. There was also a Sales Tax, and there were Port and Market Dues, Road and Frontier Dues, and if we recall, from the chapter on the geography of Palestine, that there were a great many small States, each with its own boundaries where taxes were collected, we can understand what a nuisance these last forms of taxation became to the people.

The Publicans had booths in every town and village. In St. Luke's account of the calling of St. Matthew by our Lord, we read: "And after these things, He went forth, and saw a publican named Levi *sitting at the receipt of custom*, and He said to him: 'Follow Me.' And leaving all things, he rose up and followed Him" (St. Luke v. 27, 28).

The Jews felt that they did not have to keep faith with "murderers, thieves and Publicans." No gift of a Publican could be accepted in the Temple or Synagogue; no Publican could be a judge, or even a witness in a Jewish Court of Justice, nor could any member of his family. They were complete outcasts. All the abusive things said about Publicans are recorded by St. Matthew, who had been a Publican; it is a splendid commentary on his humility.

If we bear in mind this state of things we can better ap-

preciate the force of our Lord's Parable about the Pharisee and the Publican (St. Luke xviii. 9-14). To say, as Christ our Lord did, that the Publican was justified rather than the Pharisee, was to fly in the face of public opinion and the Parable must have made a profound impression on the Jewish people who heard it.

### Pharisees

From our memory of the Sunday Gospels in which Pharisees are mentioned, we might be tempted to think that, as a class, they were all hypocrites, because we probably will call to mind very readily the fact that Christ condemned them for hypocrisy. However there were many good men who were Pharisees. We need to learn, then, something about the history of this important group in the Jewish nation. The word "Pharisee" means "separated ones," because they "separated" themselves from the heathen peoples surrounding them by a scrupulous adherence to the letter of the Law. The Pharisees originated soon after the return of the Jewish people from the Babylonian Captivity in the Sixth Century before Christ. The Jewish historian, Josephus, claims that there were about 6,000 Pharisees in the time of Christ. They were an exclusive society, a sort of religious free masonry within Jewry, closely bound to one another; each member took upon himself an oath in the presence of three others to remain true to the Laws of the Brotherhood. They had great influence with the ordinary people, though by their rules they were cut off from most of their own people, and they were absolutely cut off from all Gentiles.

Nicodemus, whom we mentioned in the Chapter on the *Gospel According to St. John*, was a Pharisee. We may mention, also, that St. Paul was a Pharisee before his conversion.

In all the *Gospels* we find the record of many clashes between our Lord and the Pharisees. Their principal fault apparently was that they had lost the spirit of the Law while adhering rigorously to its letter. They are not to be con-



sidered a "political" party, but rather a "sect." Originally they had called themselves "the pious ones."

### Scribes

Joined with the Pharisees in many of our Lord's criticisms, were the Scribes. The term "scribe" means simply "writer," but it implies learning. About 200 years before Christ, a High Priest apostatized and a group of laymen arose who dedicated themselves to the studying and expounding of the Law. They became a professional class of trained copyists and notaries, and interpreters of the Law of Moses. Practically all Scribes were Pharisees. Their status was self-assumed, based on the claim of scholarship and the conscientious observance of the Jewish Law.

Soon after the Fall of Jerusalem in 70 A. D., the functions of the Jewish Priesthood practically ceased and the Scribes became the leaders of the people.

### Sadducees

The Sadducees are mentioned only a few times in the *Synoptic Gospels*. In St. Matthew xvi. 1 we read: "And there came to Him the Pharisees and Sadducees, tempting: and they asked Him to show them a sign from heaven." St. Matthew (xxii. 23-33), St. Mark (xii. 18-27) and St. Luke (xx. 27-40) all record the incident where the Sadducees came to our Lord and asked Him whose wife a woman would be after the resurrection who, during her life, had in turn married each of seven brothers. The Sadducees did not believe in the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, nor in angels. The three Evangelists all refer to the fact that the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. For example, St. Matthew writes: "That day there came to Him the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection," etc. (St. Matt. xxii. 23).

They were a political group. The name comes from "Zadok," a High Priest; they were adherents of his family. The

name is met with about 100 B. C. The Sadducees were aristocrats and "liberal" Jews. They held to the Scriptures and the Scriptures alone, and hence differed from the Scribes and Pharisees, who laid great emphasis on the elaborate oral traditions which had grown up around the text of the Mosaic Law. Ordinarily there was little in common between the Sadducees and the other two groups, yet they forgot their differences and united in opposing Jesus. The Sadducees had great political influence in their day, but they disappeared after the destruction of Jerusalem.

The Sunday *Gospels* should become much more interesting to us when we know that the people who had such strange names as Pharisees, Sadducees, Samaritans, etc., were real people, and when we become familiar with their background and the history of how these various groups came into existence.

## DISCUSSION CLUB QUESTIONS

### Chapter I

1. Who were the four Evangelists?
2. Which of them were our Lord's Apostles?
3. Names the Apostles who wrote Books of the New Testament.
4. What is papyrus?
5. What happened to the original writings of the Apostles and Evangelists?
6. Describe the Vatican Manuscript.
7. What is a Codex?
8. Where and by whom was the Codex Sinaiticus found?
9. Tell the story of the Codex Alexandrinus.
10. How were copies of the Bible made before the invention of printing?

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### Chapter II

1. What does apocryphal mean?
2. What Church councils fixed the "Canon" of the Bible?
3. Name three early saints who testified to the authenticity of our Gospels?
4. What is the "Muratorian Fragment"?
5. Tell the story of St. Jerome.
6. What is the testimony of St. Thomas More about the English Bible?
7. Describe two German Bibles earlier than Luther's.
8. Why are we sure of the accuracy of the *Gospels*?
9. How does the account of the Resurrection prove the sincerity of the Evangelists?
10. What do we mean by the Inspiration of the Scriptures?

### Chapter III

1. Who was Roman Emperor when Christ was born? When He died?
2. Name and locate the countries near Palestine.
3. Describe the course of the River Jordan and name the Provinces which it borders.
4. What are the principal places in Galilee? In Judea?
5. Read the Gospel for the Fourth Sunday of Advent and locate the places mentioned in it.
6. Where is Caesarea Philippi, and what happened there?
7. Why is Palestine sacred to the Jews?
8. Who built Temples in Jerusalem? When and how was the last Temple destroyed?
9. Who are the Mohammedans, and what sacred building have they in Jerusalem?
10. Who governs Palestine now?

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### Chapter IV

1. What is the proper way to refer to the *Gospels*?
2. Tell briefly what we know of St. Matthew.
3. How do we know that St. Matthew wrote to convince the Jewish people?
4. What does St. Matthew tell us about the Birth and Infancy of Christ?
5. Relate the important event regarding St. Peter which we find in this *Gospel*.
6. What different bodily afflictions did our Lord miraculously cure?

7. What other miracles did Christ perform, besides healing the sick?
8. Explain what is a Parable and name at least five found in the *First Gospel*.
9. Describe the raising to life of the Ruler's daughter.
10. Explain some of the virtues discussed by Christ in the second half of the *First Gospel*.

### Chapter V

1. Relate the history of St. Mark briefly.
2. On what day is his Feast observed? What else do you know about this day?
3. What evidence is there that St. Mark was closely associated with St. Peter?
4. Describe the most remarkable characteristic of the Second Gospel.
5. In this Gospel what name does our Lord give the Apostles James and John?
6. What details does St. Mark give us about Christ in the ship during the storm?
7. How does he describe the scene of the Miraculous Feeding of the Multitude?
8. What is the name of the blind man whom Christ cured outside of Jericho?
9. Who was Simon of Cyrene?
10. What did our Lord reply to the question of the High Priest: "Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed God?"

### Chapter VI

1. What do you know of the Life of St. Luke?
2. What are the Joyful Mysteries? Describe each event.

3. What *Canticles* come from the *Third Gospel*, and where are they used?
4. In what Miracles and Parables do women play an important part?
5. In what other events in the Public Ministry of Christ do women play a part?
6. How does St. Luke try to spare the feelings of his Gentile readers?
7. Which of the Seven Last Words of Christ do we find in St. Luke?
8. Name five Parables found only in this *Gospel*.
9. Name five Miracles described only in this *Gospel*.
10. Give some instances of similarity between this *Gospel* and St. Paul's *Epistles*.

### Chapter VII

1. Relate what you know of the Life of St. John.
2. Give two reasons why St. John wrote a *Gospel*.
3. Explain what St. John means by "WORD".
4. What are the principal ways in which the *Fourth Gospel* differs from the other three?
5. What is the first Miracle related in the *Gospel According to St. John*?
6. Which one great Miracle of our Lord's is recorded in all *Four Gospels*?
7. What did the enemies of Christ say after He had raised Lazarus from the dead?
8. What can you say about St. John's account of the Last Supper?
9. Which of the Seven Last Words do we find in the *Fourth Gospel*?
10. Quote at least five texts from this *Gospel* proving the Divinity of Christ.

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### Chapter VIII

1. Explain briefly the reasons for the antagonism between the Samaritans and the Jews.
2. Are there any Samaritans still living? Where?
3. Who were the Publicans? Why were they so despised?
4. Mention some of the taxes imposed by the Roman Government on the conquered Jewish people at the time of our Lord.
5. Which of our Lord's Apostles was a publican?
6. What does the word "Pharisee" mean? Why did Christ condemn the Pharisees?
7. What character in the Gospels was a Pharisee?
8. Relate the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican.
9. What was the origin of the Scribes and what does the term mean?
10. What do you know about the Sadducees? How did the name originate?







