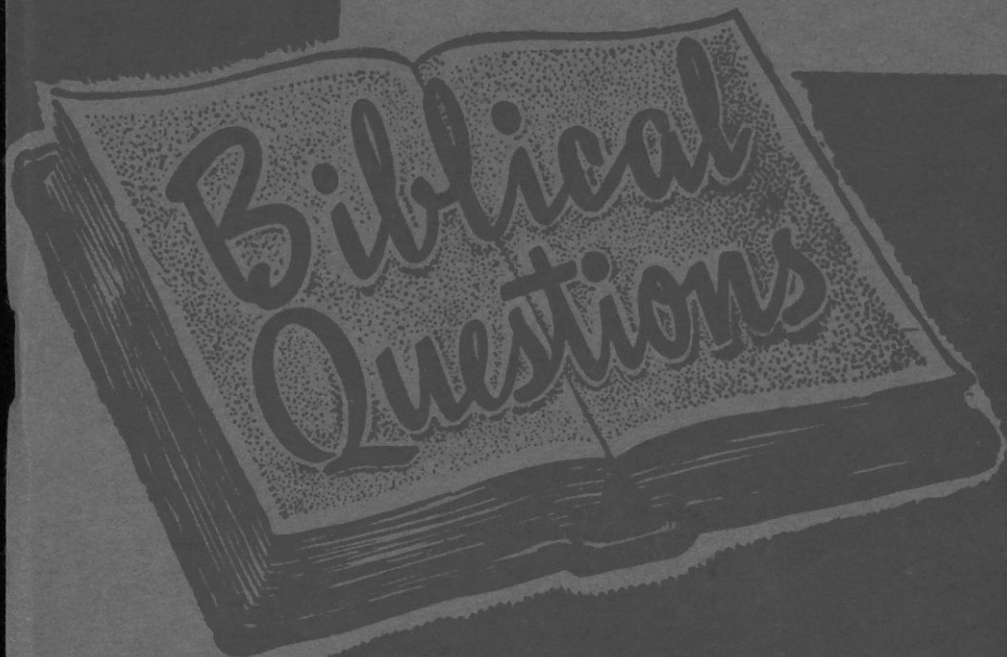


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Biblical questions
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A MANUAL FOR HIGH SCHOOL
AND COLLEGE STUDENTS AND
FOR YOUNG PEOPLES AND
ADULT DISCUSSION GROUPS

By REV. RUDOLPH G. BANDAS

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BIBLICAL QUESTIONS

A Discussion Club Manual for
Young People's and Adult Groups

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Series V

Nihil Obstat:

Rev. George Ziskovsky, S.T.D., L.S.Sc.
Censor Deputatus

die 11a Februarii, 1943

Imprimatur:

✠ JOANNES GREGORIUS MURRAY
Archiepiscopus Sancti Pauli

die 12a Februarii, 1943

Published in U. S. A.
August 20, 1953

by
Our Sunday Visitor Press
Huntington, Indiana



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Chapter I

The Synoptic Gospels

Introduction

The word "Gospel" comes from the Anglo-Saxon term "godspell" and, as used in the Bible, denotes the glad tidings of man's redemption. The four narratives designated by that title in the New Testament agree in all essentials and constitute one Gospel in four-fold form; the inspiration of the four Gospels in one and the same Jesus Christ. The words, "according to" in the title, "The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, John," merely denote authorship. Despite this fundamental oneness, however, the standpoint of each Evangelist is different, and this explains the occasional apparent discrepancies discoverable when two or more of them narrate the same thing.

The Gospels—whether taken singly or collectively—do not give us a complete biography. St. John tells us that "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" (John 21:25).

The four living creatures in Ezechiel's vision (Ezechiel 1:10; cf. Apocalypse 4:7)—which had respectively the face of a man, of a lion, of an ox and of an eagle—were from the earliest days of the Church considered as figures of the four Evangelists. The Fathers, however, were not in agreement in assigning these symbols to the Evangelists. According to the correlation proposed by St. Am-



brose,¹ Matthew, commencing with the carnal generation of Christ, portrays our Lord's humanity, and is symbolized by man. Mark pictures the regal power of Christ and is therefore symbolized by the lion. Luke opens with the vision to Zachary, the priest, and is symbolized by the sacrificial calf. John, soaring on the wings of theological contemplation even to the eternal generation of the Word, is symbolized by the eagle. This distribution of the symbols takes into account the opening words of each book rather than the individuality and whole scope of each Evangelist.

With the exception of St. Matthew's Gospel—which according to unanimous tradition was first written in Aramaic—all the Gospels were written in the Greek language.

The Synoptic Problem

The order of the Gospels in our printed Bible is that sanctioned by Tradition. The first three Gospels are frequently called the Synoptics (from the Greek terms *syn*—"together," and *opsis*—"view"). When placed side by side and brought under one view, these three Gospels present a striking resemblance and appear as one narrative. Not only are many of the same events and speeches recorded in each, but the order and manner in which they are narrated is nearly the same.² The problem as to the origin and relation of the first three Gospels, presented by these resemblances, has been

¹ Comment. in Lucam, P. L. XV: 1532.

² Consult for example: cure of demoniac: Mk. I, 23-38; Lk. IV, 33-37; supper in Levi's house; Mtt. IX, 10-13; Mk. II, 15-17; Lk. V, 29-32; cure of withered hand; Mtt. XII, 9-13; Mk. III, 1-5; Lk. VI, 6-10; parable of sower; Mtt. XIII, 1-9; Mk. IV, 1-9; Lk. VIII, 4-8.

called the "Synoptic Problem." We can here only touch on some of the many theories proposed to solve this problem.

1) Some scholars find the solution in the oral tradition of the Church (Oral-Tradition theory): The early Apostolic teaching took a fixed form; the life and teaching of our Lord came eventually to be told in practically the same stereotyped way; the Synoptists—independently of each other—simply wrote down this stereotyped oral Gospel.

This theory is universally recognized to be insufficient. The Synoptics do not quite agree on some very important matters on which we would expect tradition to be unanimous—as the words of the institution of the Eucharist, the Lord's Prayer, the narrative of Peter's confession. Again, the language of the primitive catechesis was Aramaic; the Gospels in the form in which we possess them are in Greek; yet the Synoptics often agree word for word.

2) Others maintain that the three Synoptics were derived—with more or less modification—from one written source. This theory, however, fails to explain the omissions by St. Mark and the differences in arrangement in the Synoptics. Again, why are all contemporaries and the Gospels themselves silent about this source?

3) According to the Two-Document theory, the oldest and original document was a collection of the sayings of the Lord, which contained the Sermon on the Mount, the temptation of our Lord, and a number of other incidents. This collection of sayings is no longer extant as a distinct document. Next, St. Mark wrote his Gospel which was an ori-

ginal and independent composition. Then our present St. Matthew's Gospel (in Greek) and St. Luke's Gospel were compiled; the Evangelist in each case took Mark's Gospel as his model and chief source, and to this framework he added the sayings of our Lord and finally the materials peculiar to his Gospel.

The Two-Document theory cannot be reconciled with the constant tradition of the Church—a tradition which can be traced to the beginning of the second century—that St. Matthew's Gospel preceded the others and was originally written in Aramaic. Catholic scholars, however, may subscribe to the following arrangement: Matthew wrote the first Gospel in Aramaic; Mark used this Gospel when composing his own Gospel in Greek; then the Greek translation of Matthew was made in partial dependence on Mark but in substantial conformity with the Aramaic original; Luke wrote in partial dependence on Matthew and Mark but had other sources at his disposal.

4) The best solution seems to be the following: Mark and Luke used the writings of their predecessors: in addition, each Evangelist used sources and oral traditions peculiar to himself. The differences can be explained partly by the variations in the oral Gospel, partly by the style, special purpose and personality of each of the Evangelists.

St. Matthew

St. Matthew's Gospel was intended for the Jewish converts of Palestine, and was written in Aramaic, the language of the country. Unlike St. Luke (3:38) who in his genealogy of Christ goes back to God, St. Matthew goes no further back than

Abraham (1:1-2). From the outset St. Matthew shows us in Jesus the son *par excellence* of Abraham and David—the Messiah in Whom were fulfilled the prophetic oracles. Writing primarily for members of the chosen race, the Evangelist does not explain such Jewish terms as “raca” (“fool”) (5:22), “carbona” (27:6), etc. St. Matthew does not explain—as St. Luke does—Palestinian geographical terms, but simply speaks of Christ’s “own city” and “own country” (9:1; 13:54). He repeatedly dwells on our Lord’s denunciations of the Pharisees and of the Jewish leaders (ch. 12, 16, 22, 23).

The aim of the first Gospel is to show that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah—the Christ or the “Anointed One”—promised in the Old Testament, and that His kingdom is the Church which He founded. St. Matthew constantly refers to prophecies fulfilled in our Lord in words such as these: “As it is written.” “This was done that it might be fulfilled what the Lord spoke.” St. Matthew reproduces some sixty or seventy passages from the Old Testament; the other Evangelists together quote the Old Testament about fifty times. Again, St. Mark and St. Luke as a rule adduce only those quotations which occur in our Lord’s discourses; St. Matthew, on the other hand, argues from the pages of the sacred text. While proving that Jesus is the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies, St. Matthew at the same time explains how the Jews—always resisting the inspirations of divine grace—rejected Him Who came upon earth primarily to save the Jews.

Although St. Matthew wrote chiefly for Jewish converts, his Gospel is not restricted to them. The adoration of the Magi—who represent the first fruits of the conversion of the Gentiles to Christ—

should more naturally find a place in the third Gospel, the Gospel of universal salvation; yet the account of it is found in the first Gospel. Again, St. Matthew narrates parables in which special preference is given to the Gentiles—as, for example, the parables of the two sons, of the wicked husbandmen, and of the marriage of the king's son. He quotes prophecies concerning the Gentiles (8:11; 12:18, 21; 21:42 to 22:14; 25:32) and narrates miracles worked by our Lord for them (8:5-13; 15:21-28). He declares the universality of the Messiah's kingdom in narrating Christ's commission to His Apostles to go and teach all nations (28-19). On the other hand, the first Gospel leaves to the third the narration of such specifically Jewish incidents as the mission of the Precursor, the Circumcision, the ransoming of Jesus, and Mary's purification.

While the opening chapters of St. Luke's Gospel are composed from the viewpoint of the Mother of Jesus, those of St. Matthew's are composed from the viewpoint of St. Joseph. In St. Luke's Gospel all events seem to converge toward Mary, in St. Matthew's Gospel all events gravitate around St. Joseph. It is to Joseph that the angel announces the approaching birth of a Saviour from a virgin mother. He it is who is head of the Holy Family. He receives the order to take the Divine Infant as quickly as possible to Egypt in order to withdraw Him from the plots of Herod. It is to him again that the order is given—when the danger is past—to bring Jesus back to Palestine. On the basis of this double circumstance, may we not legitimately argue that, directly or indirectly, it is above all to St. Joseph and Mary, who took so great a part in the mysteries of the Infancy and Hidden Life, and to the members of

their family, that St. Matthew and St. Luke owe their remarkable acquaintance with these phases of Christ's life?

St. Mark

St. Mark was the son of Mary whose house at Jerusalem was a meeting place of the Christians. It was to Mary's house that St. Peter went after his miraculous deliverance from prison. Some conjecture that the youth who fled naked from Gethsemani (14:51) was the Evangelist himself. St. Mark was baptized and instructed by St. Peter. In about the year 42 A.D. he came to Rome with the Prince of the Apostles. There at the request of the faithful he wrote his Gospel about the year 50 A.D. His Gospel is a record of the substance of St. Peter's preaching concerning our Lord. St. Peter's discourse in the house of the Roman centurion Cornelius (Acts 10:34-43) has been justly considered as an outline of St. Mark's Gospel—as St. Mark's Gospel in miniature.

The Gospel of St. Mark gives special attention to St. Peter. The vivid descriptions, the swift movement of thought, the frequent use of such words as "straightway," "immediately," "quickly," "forthwith," "at once," strongly recall the quick and impulsive fisherman of Galilee. The Gospel suppresses incidents indicative of his position and dignity among the Apostles, such as, for example, the walking upon the water (Matt. 14:29), the finding of the coin in the fish's mouth (Matt. 17:26), the promise of the Primacy (Matt. 16:16-19), and the commission to confirm the brethren (Luke 22:31-32). On the other hand, events which are derogatory to St. Peter are deliberately emphasized—even when they

are minimized or passed over by the other Evangelists. Nowhere, for example, is the depth of St. Peter's fall more fully indicated than in Mark's Gospel. One can well imagine St. Peter supervising "over St. Mark's shoulder" the composition of the Gospel so that the Apostle's defects rather than his merits are emphasized.

Internal evidence shows that the Gospel was written for Gentiles, especially for Roman Gentile converts. The Gospel quotes but seldom from the Old Testament (cf. 1:2, 3; 15:28), since an appeal to the prophets would have been meaningless to the Romans. So, too, the title "Son of David" is rarely applied to our Lord. Comparisons between the Old and the New Law—which form so striking a feature in the Sermon on the Mount—are also missing. On the other hand, St. Mark is careful to explain Jewish rites and customs which might prove unintelligible to a pagan reader, as, for example, **the purifications** (7:3), the passover (14:12), the day of preparation (15:42). He explains words and expressions which Gentile converts would not be likely to understand; for example: "Boanerges" (3:17), "Talitha cumi" (5:41), "Ephpheta" (7:34), "Corban" (7:11), "Bar-Timeus" (10:46), "Two mites" (12:42). He uses Latin terms which no other Evangelist employs; for example, "spiculator," executioner (6:27), "saxtarius," a cup (7:8), "quadrans" a farthing (12:42), "centurio," a Roman officer in charge of 100 soldiers (15:39).

The aim of St. Mark's Gospel is to show, especially from our Lord's miracles, that Christ is true God, that He alone verifies in Himself the Roman title of "Lord of All." The very first verse of the Gospel contains the triumphant assertion of Christ's

Divinity: "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." The Evangelist not only affirms the fact of our Lord's Divinity but also indicates its consequences. He shows that all things in heaven and upon earth must needs be subject to Christ. It is for this reason that Mark insists so much on miracles and dwells upon them with a fullness of detail not found in St. Matthew's and St. Luke's Gospels. Writing for the pagans who peopled nature with divinities and admitted the existence of "many gods", St. Mark describes especially Christ's miracles over nature and shows that even evil spirits must be subject to Him. In St. Mark's account, Christ never uses explicitly the title "Son of God" but always refers to Himself as "Son of Man". Our Lord's humble ways thus stand in sharp contrast with those of the Roman Emperors who boldly and proudly styled themselves the gods, lords and saviours of the world.

St. Mark excels in portraying the emotions and affections of both Christ and His hearers. He gives minute details of our Lord's gestures, looks and words. He calls attention to Christ's anger, indignation, love, pity, grief and wonder. At the same time the Evangelist records the deep impression which Christ's words and miracles had on His followers. He tells us that the disciples and the multitudes were in astonishment at His doctrine and works.

St. Luke

St. Luke was a native of Antioch—a city renowned for its learning—where he received his early education. From the fluency and perfection of his literary style, it is inferred that he was a

Greek. The teaching of Tradition that St. Luke was a physician is based on certain statements in his own writings. The Evangelist manifests great interest in diseases and their cure, and describes them in the language of ancient medicine. St. Paul explicitly refers to him as "the most dear physician" (Colossians 4:14). The belief that St. Luke was a painter is based on the statement of Nicephoras Callistos of the sixteenth century that the Empress Eudocia "sent to Pulcheria from Jerusalem an image of the Mother of God, which the Apostle Luke had painted".³ After his conversion he became a special friend of St. Paul, whom he first met at Troas. He remained St. Paul's companion on the missionary journeys. He visited St. Paul frequently during the latter's imprisonment at Caesarea, remained at the Apostle's side during the two years' imprisonment in Rome, and was alone with St. Paul at the time of his last imprisonment (II Timothy 4:11). Little is known of St. Luke after St. Paul's death.

1) St. Luke's Gospel is a record of Christ's life and teaching as preached by St. Paul. It stresses those facts which illustrate—in the spirit of the Apostle of the Gentiles—the universality of salvation for both Jew and Greek. It sets Christ forth as the Saviour of mankind. In exquisitely tender colors it depicts our Lord as the merciful and pitying Divine Physician—as the Friend of sinners and Consoler of afflicted. It describes those incidents which would touch the hearts of the heathen and awaken their confidence in God. The love of Christ for sinners is illustrated in the accounts of Zachaeus (19:2), the sinful woman

³ P. G. LXXXVI, Col. 165.

(7:37), and the penitent thief (23:42-43). It is St. Luke's Gospel alone that narrates the beautiful parables of the Good Samaritan (10:25), the Prodigal Son (15:11), the Unjust Steward (16:1), Dives and Lazarus (16:19), the Pharisee and the Publican (18:10). The doctrine of universal salvation appears even in the genealogy of Christ, which is brought down from Adam, the father of all mankind (3:23-38), and not—as in St. Matthew's Gospel—from Abraham, the father of the chosen people. The Evangelist omits whatever might be offensive to the Gentiles or cause the Jews to glory over them. The mockery and execution of Christ by the Roman soldiers is passed over in silence.

Besides being called the "Gospel of Mercy", St. Luke's Gospel is frequently designated by various other titles. Occasionally it is referred to as the "Gospel of antithetical pictures." St. Luke has left us such contrasts as the following: Simon and the Sinful Woman; Martha and Mary; the Pharisee and the Publican; the Good Samaritan and the Priest and the Levite; Dives and Lazarus; the Good Thief and the Bad. St. Luke's Gospel has also been called the "Gospel of Hymns" because it contains the *Magnificat*, the *Benedictus* and the *Nunc Dimittis*. It is also said to be the "Gospel of Prayers", not only because it contains the Our Father and the Hail Mary but because it alone records that our Lord prayed on several distinct occasions—at His baptism, after cleansing the leper, before calling the Twelve, at His Transfiguration, on the cross for His executioners, and at the moment of His death (3:21; 5:16, 6:12, etc.).

St. Luke's Gospel has in a special manner been

designated as the "Gospel of women". It places before us and describes the following feminine characters: Elizabeth, the Mother of John the Baptist; Anna, the aged prophetess; the "sinful woman" who anointed the Lord's feet in the house of the Pharisee (7:36-50); the women "who ministered unto Jesus of their substance", among whom was Mary Magdalen (8:2); Martha, the sister of Lazarus, and Mary, Martha's sister (10:38-42); "the woman in the crowd" who lifted up her voice and said to Jesus: "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee" (11:27); the widow of Naim (7:11-17); the woman whom our Lord delivered from her infirmity (13:10-17); the women of Jerusalem who met Jesus on the way to Calvary (23:27-31). Preeminent among all these is Mary, the Mother of God, who occupies a prominent place especially in the first two chapters of the Gospel.

2) The Acts of the Apostles—also written by St. Luke—are a continuation of the third Gospel, and like it are addressed to a certain Theophilus. The plan and scope of the Acts are contained in the words of our Lord uttered shortly before the Ascension: "You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you and you shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth" (1:8). Christ here assigns a twofold field of labor to His Apostles—Palestine, on the one hand, and the Gentile world, on the other. Accordingly, St. Luke narrates in a concrete manner the foundation and propagation of the Church among the Jews through the instrumentality of St. Peter (1 to 12), and then among the Gentiles

through the instrumentality of St. Paul (13 to 28). In describing the faithful execution of the Master's command, St. Luke at the same time shows that Christ is the Redeemer of all men—of both Jews and Gentiles—and that the Gospel is the power of salvation unto all who believe (Romans 1:16). St. Luke is also careful to indicate how the Holy Ghost presided over every step and stage of the work, and hence the Acts have been called the "Gospel of the Holy Ghost"; for it is He Who acts, speaks, enjoins, prohibits—in a word, Who is the principle animating and impelling the chief personages.⁴

⁴ Consult the popular yet scholarly Commentaries on the Gospels and the Acts (London) by Madame Cecelia.

Discussion Aids

SET I

1. What is the origin and meaning of the "Gospel"?
2. In what sense is there only one Gospel in the New Testament? How do you account for the differences between the four Gospels?
3. Do the four Gospels tell us everything about Christ?
4. What are the symbols for the four Evangelists?
5. In what language were the Gospels written?

SET II

1. What is meant by the word "synoptic"?
2. Why are the first three Gospels called "Synoptic" Gospels?
3. What is the "Synoptic Problem"?

4. What solutions have been proposed to this problem?
5. What seems to be the satisfactory answer?

SET III

1. For whom was St. Matthew's Gospel written? Explain?
2. Why was St. Matthew's Gospel written? Give proofs in support of your answer.
4. Does St. Matthew's Gospel omit specifically Jewish incidents? Give examples.
5. What great saint is featured by the opening chapters of St. Matthew's Gospel? What conclusions do you draw from this?
6. Who was St. Mark?
7. What was his Gospel?
8. What saint does the Gospel feature in a special way ?
9. For whom was St. Mark's Gospel written?
10. What was the aim of St. Mark's Gospel?
11. What characteristics of Christ and of Christ's followers does St. Mark portray?
12. Who was St. Luke?
13. St. Luke's Gospel is said to be the "Gospel of Mercy." Explain.
14. What four other titles have been given to St. Luke's Gospel? Why ?
15. What great saint occupies a prominent place in the opening chapters of St. Luke's Gospel?
16. Mention some Catholic book which carries an explanation of the Sunday Epistles and Gospels. Give a summary of the explanation of next Sunday's Gospel.

Religious Practices

1. I will listen with reverent attention to the reading of the Gospel on Sunday.
2. In imitation of St. Matthew I will try to bring the Jews of our day to recognize Christ as the Promised Messiah.
3. With St. Mark I will make frequent acts of faith in the Divinity of Christ: "God of God, light of light, true God of true God; begotten, not made; being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made" (Nicene Creed).
4. With St. Luke I will have confidence in the infinite mercy and compassion of the God-Man.

Chapter II

The Gospel of St. John

It is the constant and unbroken voice of Tradition that John, the son of Zebedee—the beloved disciple and Apostle of Christ—wrote the fourth Gospel. In all the manuscripts and versions, the Gospel bears his name. Whenever it is quoted, it is quoted as the Gospel according to St. John. A decisive testimony in regard to the Johannine authorship of the fourth Gospel comes to us from St. Irenaeus, a disciple of St. Polycarp who in turn was a disciple of St. John himself. St. Irenaeus writes: "The John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned on His breast, himself also published a Gospel while he was at Ephesus in Asia."¹ Tertullian, echoing the tradition of northern Africa, frequently quotes from the fourth Gospel, and designates its author as the beloved disciple—the Apostle John. From Egypt comes the testimony of Clement of Alexandria who in his extant works quotes the fourth Gospel more than one hundred times and refers to it as the work of the Apostle John. Clement says: "John, perceiving that the other Evangelists had set forth the human side of the Person of Jesus, at the instance of his disciples composed a spiritual Gospel".²

St. John wrote his Gospel partly with a view to supplementing those of his predecessors but principally to establish on a firm basis the Divinity of

¹ *Adv. Haer.* III:1.

² Cited by Eusebius, *Eccl. History*, VI:14.

Christ, even then impugned by Cerinth and other heretics. John has explicitly told us what was the object of his Gospel: "Many other signs also did Jesus in the sight of His disciples which are not written in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in his name" (20:30, 31). The Important passages affirming Christ's Divinity are the following: "The Word was God" (1:1) "For God so loved the world as as to give His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish but may have life everlasting" (3:16); "My father worketh until now and I Work" (5:17); "I and the Father are one" (10:30); "He who sees Me sees the Father also; do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in Me?" (14:9-10) and Thomas' confession, "My Lord and my God" (20:28). While thus extolling the Divine character of Christ, St. John at the same time represents Him as true Man. The Incarnate Word is described as assisting at the wedding at Cana and at the feast at Bethany. We read of His friendship for the beloved disciple, for Lazarus, Martha and Mary. He sits weary at the well of Jacob and weeps at the tomb of Lazarus. His last discourse is an outpouring of love for His disciples. He tastes the bitterness of the chalice (12:27). His last thought is for His Blessed Mother (19:26-27).

Christ, according to St. John, is God, He is the Light of the World, enlightening all men that come into this world, and—according to their dispositions—attracting them or repelling them. This self-revelation of Christ, with the accompany-

ing acceptance or rejection of Him by men, is emphasized throughout the fourth Gospel. The Gospel explains how it was that the Abrahamic promises were not fulfilled in the Jews of Jerusalem. It shows that Christ left nothing undone to convince the Jews of His Messianic and Divine dignity. Their rejection of Him was due entirely to their own deliberate obstinacy. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him"—as many as believed in His doctrine—"He gave the power to be made sons of God." The gift of adoptive sonship was not to be dispensed merely because some by flesh and blood happened to be of the Jewish race.

The particular scope of the author and the time of composition have given the fourth Gospel a character quite different from that of the Synoptics. In the first place, St. John's Gospel has little of the Synoptic material. This absence is not due to St. John's ignorance of the first three Gospels, for he knows the Synoptics and makes a clear allusion to their contents (1:26-33; 6:68; 12-27). St. John's aim is not to rewrite the Synoptics but to give the Church another Gospel, a more profound presentation of the Person and teaching of Christ. St. John goes beyond the Synoptics, and presents a number of incidents and discourses which prove the special object which he set for himself. He is not a mere chronicler, and consequently passes over what the Synoptics had already told and what everyone already knew. He says nothing of the institution of the Eucharist and of Baptism—not because he did not know of these two sacraments, but because his Gospel is primarily doctrinal and not narrative. In-

stead of relating the institution of these two sacraments, he gives us two dogmatic discourses in which Christ foretells and explains the nature of each. That, on the other hand, so little of the Johannine material is found in the Synoptics likewise presents no serious difficulty. The Synoptics do not purport to be a complete history of Christ. No one Gospel pretends to be an exhaustive account of His life and teaching. The fourth Gospel is selective, the Synoptics are at best only fragmentary.

Secondly, in the Synoptics Christ propounds His teaching in simple language and in parables derived from the scenes of everyday life; in the fourth Gospel the tone is always dogmatical, lofty, majestic, sublime and often very enigmatic. These two pictures of Christ's teaching method, however, are both historical and true. The Synoptists wrote during the infancy of the Church; St. John wrote at a time when the Church was well established. The Synoptists had indeed grasped the full doctrine concerning Christ; St. John lived in that doctrine, steeped his soul in it, and meditated upon it for seventy years before he wrote his Gospel. The synoptists wrote for the newly converted pagans and Jews who had to be taught the elements of Christianity; St. John wrote for the third generation of Christians, who already knew the Synoptics and whose deeper theological learning enabled them to understand the more profound aspect of our Lord's teaching as well as to detect the errors of heresy and false speculation. The Synoptists deal largely with our Lord's life and teaching in Galilee; St. John concentrates on the happenings in Judea. When Christ preached to the simple and unlettered

population of Galilee, He presented His teaching in that popular and elementary way which the Synoptics portray; when He spoke to Jewish scholars in Jerusalem or was engaged in controversy with the theologically trained Scribes and Pharisees, His teaching was expressed in the language of the Jewish schools, was more profound and—when occasion demanded—also more guarded. St. John was an eye-and-ear-witness of what he relates, and hence the *content* of his Gospel is derived directly from Christ. But the *style* and *form* in which this matter is expressed are frequently John's.

It is pointed out, in the third place, that while St. John's account of the public ministry of Christ comprises three passovers (four if we include 5:1), the Synoptics speak of only one Pasch, the one during which the crucifixion took place. Since Christ's ministry doubtless began several months before the first Pasch, it lasted—according to St. John's Gospel—at least two years and a half (three years and a half if we include 5:1); according to the Synoptic scheme, on the other hand, it extended over only one year. St. John enumerates at least three passovers: "And the Pasch of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem" (2:13); "Now the Pasch, the festival day of the Jews, was near at hand" (6:4); "Jesus, therefore, six days before the Pasch, came to Bethania" (12:1). Many scholars also refer to the Pasch the words found in 5:1: "After these things was a festival day of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem." Are we then in the presence of a contradiction between St. John and the Synoptists? We do not think so. The Synoptics are not exhaustive but at best fragmen-

tary; they considerably abridge the Saviour's public life and condense its events. Furthermore, it is not a case of three witnesses against one, but of an early Synoptic tradition in contrast with the mature theme of St. John. It is to be also noted that the Synoptic account really supposes several Paschal solemnities during our Lord's ministry (cf. Matthew 12:1; Mark 2:23; Luke 6:1). Finally, it is impossible to compress within the space of one year the work accomplished by our Lord. All that going and coming described by the Synoptists, the journeys through the cities and villages of Galilee, the prolonged sojourns at Capharnaum, the excursions into the neighboring regions, the retreats to the mountains and solitary places—all these events cannot be embraced within a single year.

Since Mariology is being discussed especially in this series, it is fitting that we should consider in this connection the well-known statement of Our Lord recorded in St. John's Gospel:

“WHAT IS THAT TO ME AND TO THEE?”

The phrase, “Woman, what is that to me Me and to thee? My hour is not yet come”, has been the object of many different interpretations. Some consider it as a rebuke to Mary on the part of our Lord, and appeal to it in their criticism of our filial devotion to the Blessed Virgin. The context in which the passage occurs is the following: “And the third day, there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited, and His disciples, to the marriage. And the wine failing, the mother of Jesus saith to Him: They have no wine. And Jesus saith to her: Woman, what is that to Me

and to thee? My hour is not yet come. His mother saith to the waiters: Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye" (John 2:1-5).

It is certain that the words, "Woman, what is that to Me and to thee? My hour is not yet come", do not contain a repulse or rebuke. A rebuke presupposes guilt and Mary—as the Council of Trent teaches³—was free from the slightest taint of sin. In fact there was nothing in her request deserving of a rebuke. Her request was prompted by charity and expressed with great prudence. In simple terms Mary explained the embarrassment of the spouses and left it to her Son to perform a miracle, if He judged opportune. Besides, since she saw her Son heralded by the Baptist and surrounded by disciples, she could prudently judge that the hour of His manifesting Himself through miracles had arrived.

The title "woman" contains nothing disrespectful. In trying to penetrate the meaning of the term we must not take for a criterion our own social code but must place ourselves in the circumstances and social customs in which it was used. Now, in the Syro-Chaldaic language, which Jesus spoke, this was the customary and honorable form of address to any woman. The same usage of the term "woman" prevailed among the Greeks; as Aeschylus tells us, even queens were addressed in that way. Augustus is said to have used this title in addressing Cleopatra. In Spain the word "mujer", "woman", is still used as an affectionate form of address. That Jesus did not consider it in any way offensive is evident from the fact that He used it again on the Cross, when He was entrusting His mother to the

care and kind offices of St. John: "Woman, behold thy son". Christ also used it in addressing the weeping Magdalene at the tomb: "Woman, why weepest thou?" Surely our Lord would use only the kindest form of address to a woman who was weeping through great love of Him.

While we know with certainty what the words, "Woman, what is (that) to Me and to thee? My hour is not yet come", do not imply, it is more difficult to say what they signify positively. We shall briefly state the principle interpretations as presented by the Belgian Scripturist, F. C. Ceulemans, in his Commentary on St. John's Gospel (p. 35):

A. Some take the words, "What is that to Me and to thee?," as equivalent to saying, "What have I and you in common, O woman, in this work of performing miracles? In these I depend not on the will of man but on the will of My Father." This is held to be the reason, too, why Christ said, "Woman" and not "mother."

Such an answer, however, could hardly be excused from irreverence. It is excluded by the words of Christ Himself. The reason why Christ said, "What is that to Me and to thee?", is not the fact that they have nothing in common in this matter but that "My hour is not yet come." The explanation is likewise excluded by the next verse, which shows that Mary understood that the miracle would be performed.

B. In view of the fact that Christ said: "My hour is not yet come", and nevertheless worked the miracle, some maintain that a considerable period

³ Sess. VI, can. 23.

of time elapsed between the words of Christ and the performance of the miracle. Since Mary asked for the miracle at an inopportune time, Christ said to her: "Let Me take care of that; the moment for acting has not yet come." From this answer Mary understood that her Son would provide at an opportune time, and accordingly advised the waiter to do "whatever He shall say to you."

This explanation is unacceptable for two reasons: first, Mary began to petition when the wine had failed or began to fail—at a moment, consequently, which was opportune for the miracle; secondly, only a short time seems to have intervened between Christ's response and the miracle, for the latter could hardly be deferred without embarrassment to the spouses.

C. The Jesuit exegete Knabenbauer maintains that both members of the passage should be followed by a question mark and read as follows: "What is that to Me and to thee? Has My hour not yet come?" The text consequently would convey the following meaning: "What need is there that you urge Me? Has not the hour of My manifestation already come?" In other words, "I am ready to do what you desire, since the moment of manifesting My mission publicly has already come." Several arguments seem to favor this interpretation. Tatian and Gregory of Nyssa punctuated the passage in this way. There are many passages in the Gospels which should be read with an interrogation point but which lack the question mark. Christ no doubt came to the marriage feast to manifest Himself in a special manner, and Mary understood from Christ's answer that a miracle would be granted.

This theory is open to two objections: first, the Fathers of the Church and the oldest codices of the Bible read the passage, "My hour is not yet come," without a question mark; second, this explanation deprives Mary of all share and part in the miracle.

D. The expression, "What is that to Me and to thee?" occurs about twelve times in the Bible.⁴ Hence the proper approach to an understanding of the phrase is to study it successively in these twelve contexts and determine the meaning common to all of them. Now, what results does such an inductive study yield? In these contexts the phrase is equivalent to the question why an agent acts in a certain manner. More specifically, it expresses disapproval of some action or line of conduct which another is practising toward the speaker. The phrase may be used to enemies or friends; when employed to enemies it contains an indignant protest against some action; when employed to friends it indicates that some action proposed or executed was ill-advised and importunate. In what sense the phrase is used is to be determined from the circumstance of the discourse, and from the facial expression, gestures and tone of voice of the speaker. That our Lord pronounced the words gently and kindly is clear from the fact that Mary understood that her petition was heard and was soon to be fulfilled. Taking the phrase, "My hour has not yet come," as referring to the beginning of the series of miracles, we may render the whole passage as follows: "Why dost thou constrain Me by thy prayers? My hour of performing miracles has not yet come."

⁴ cf. Josue 22:24; Judges 11:12; II Kings 16:10; 19:22; III Kings 17:18; IV Kings 3:13; II Para. 35:21; Matthew 8:29; 27:19; Mark 5:7; Luke 8:28.

After having verbally refused to perform the miracle, why does Christ shortly afterward nevertheless do so? Is there a contradiction between His assertion and His action? A parallel event in our Lord's life, narrated in Matthew, 15:21-28, helps us to understand the present incident. In that section we read that the Canaanite woman besought the Lord to heal her daughter possessed by the devil. Christ at first seems to ignore her. When the disciples besought Him in her behalf, Jesus answered that He was sent only to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel. But because the woman's faith persisted, Jesus finally hears her and heals her daughter. What caused Him to do that which He at first seems to decline? Faith! "O woman, great is thy faith, be it done to thee as thou wilt."

Our Lord's initial negative attitude had the precise purpose of bringing out into greater relief—for the instruction and edification of others—the all-important prerequisite of the miracle, namely, faith in His Divine power. Our Lord frequently tested the faith of those nearest to Him: On the lake in the storm Jesus slept until the Apostles cried out to Him in despair; when Martha and Mary sent Him word that their brother was sick, He allowed the man to die, in order to put to a greater test their faith in Him as Author of life.

Now let us transport ourselves to Cana. Our Lord lovingly seems to decline: "What is that to Me and to thee? My hour is not yet come." Why? In order to call attention to that all-important element which made Him advance, as it were, the hour of His miracles—namely, Mary's abiding faith in His Divine Omnipotence. How much faith, indeed, is

concealed in those words. "They have no wine;" "Whatever He shall say to you"—although you may not understand the motive of His command—"do ye." It was very important to call attention to this persevering faith in His Divinity, lest it appear that He was performing the miracle from a social motive, for the private benefit of His friends and acquaintances. Since Christ was not testing Mary's faith but rather showing unto us its perfection, He used a Hebraism which conveyed the idea at once of an importunity and an assurance of a request granted.

Discussion Aids

SET I

1. Who was the author of the fourth Gospel?
2. Why did St. John write his Gospel?
3. Quote some of the passages in which St. John proclaims the divinity of Christ; the humanity of Christ.
4. What, according to St. John, was the reaction of the Jews to Christ's mission?
5. Make a list of the differences between St. John's Gospel and the Synoptics.
6. In what circumstances of life would you pray especially to St. John?
7. Why was St. John called the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (e.g. 21:20)?
8. Why did St. John deserve to be entrusted with the custody of the Blessed Virgin Mary (19:27)?

SET II

1. Do the words—"What is that to Me and to thee"—contain a rebuke to Mary?

BIBLICAL QUESTIONS

2. Does the title "woman" imply anything disrespectful?
3. Are the words—"What is that to Me and to thee"—to be understood as excluding Mary from any connection with the miracle?
4. Did considerable time elapse between the words of Christ and the performance of the miracle?
5. What is the theory of the Scripturist Knabenbauer?
6. How is the correct meaning to be determined?
7. What moved Christ to perform the miracle after He had verbally declined?
8. What lesson does the miracle teach us?
9. How does it establish Mary's intercessory power?
10. Show how Matthew 12:46-50, far from containing any slight to Mary, brings out one of her virtues.
11. Do you see any connection between John 2:4, 19:26, and Genesis 3:15 ("woman")?

Religious Practices

1. I will read with attention and reverence the Prologue of St. John's Gospel said at the end of Mass.
2. I will make an act of faith in the Incarnation internally when I genuflect at the words, "And the Word was made flesh" (John 1:14).
3. I will have great confidence in Mary's intercessory power and in my prayers imitate her faith in Christ's divine power.

Chapter III

The Two Annunciations

THE APPARITION TO ZACHARY

St. Luke indicates the date of the apparition to Zachary by placing it toward the end of the reign of Herod the Great (1:5). The true scepter had verily departed from Juda. For the Herod in question was the son of an Idumean, of the wealthy and influential Antipater or Antipas. Antipater actively cultivated the friendship of the Romans. Through the influence of his father the ambitious Herod obtained first the government of Galilee and finally that of Judea. History represents Herod as a cruel monster. His life was a series of murders of which the victims were not only the Holy Innocents but also his own wives and children.

Upon the death of Herod, the Emperor Augustus divided Palestine among Herod's sons: Archelaus, the eldest, succeeded his father and received the provinces of Judea, Samaria and Idumaea; Herod II Antipas obtained Galilee and the south of Peraea (east of the Jordan); Philip II, the north of the country to the east of the Jordan, Ituraea and the country of Trachonitis.¹ It was Herod II who later on beheaded John the Baptist and mocked the Saviour. Archelaus ruled with the same cruelty as his father and was exiled to Vienne in Gaul, A.D. 6.

¹ The term "tetrarch" (Lk. 3:1) literally means one who governs the fourth of a region. Gradually the word received a broad signification and came to be applied to administrators inferior to king but yet enjoying some of the prerogatives of royalty.

His territory was incorporated into the Roman province of Syria and administered by special Roman governors, of whom the fifth was Pontius Pilate (A.D. 26-36).

Shortly afterward the province of Herod II Antipas and also that of Philip II and the territory once governed by Archelaus were—by imperial favor—granted to a nephew of Herod the Great, Herod Agrippa I, who ruled as king of all Palestine from 41 to 44 A.D. About the year 41 he beheaded the Apostle James the Great, and caused Peter to be apprehended. Upon the sudden death of Herod Agrippa I, Palestine was joined to Syria and again administered by Roman governors. However, the son of Agrippa I—Herod Agrippa II—obtained and retained until after the destruction of Jerusalem the title of king of the northeastern parts of the country and the custody of the Temple; it was to him that St. Paul gave at Caesarea an account of his life (Acts 26). Prominent among the governors of this period were Felix, before whom St. Paul appeared in bonds at Caesarea (Acts 24), and Festus, who sent St. Paul to Rome to be judged (Acts 25). Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed by Vespasian and Titus in the year 70 A.D.

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Having briefly described the political setting of the events which we are about to explain, let us now turn our attention to the central figure of the present chapter—namely, Zachary. St. Luke tells us that Zachary was “of the course of Abia” (1:5), that is, a member of one of the twenty-four orders of Aaronic priests constituted by David. We know that in place of the first-born of Israel—whom God re-

served to Himself in Egypt—God through Moses chose for Himself the tribe of Levi as a hereditary priesthood (Numbers 3). But while the whole tribe of Levi was chosen for service in the Temple, only those of the line of Aaron were selected for the priesthood. Aaron had four sons, but the two elder—Nadab and Abia—were struck dead for using strange fire in the sanctuary (Leviticus 10). The descendants of the remaining two sons—Eleazar and Ithamar—were in the time of David divided into twenty-four classes. Sixteen of these classes were of the family of Eleazar and eight of the family of Ithamar. The eighth of these twenty-four classes was that of Abia to which Zachary belonged. To these twenty-four courses of priests David distributed by lot the order of their service in the Temple, each course to serve for eight days inclusively from Sabbath to Sabbath (I Chronicles 24:1-19; II Chronicles 31:2). After the Babylonian captivity, only four of the courses returned. The Jews concealed their heavy loss by subdividing these four families into twenty-four courses to which they gave the original names. The course of Abia to which Zachary belonged was not one of the four families, but another to which the name of Abia was assigned. This arrangement continued till the fall of Jerusalem, 70 A.D.

A priest was free to select a wife from any family or tribe. Elizabeth, however, is declared to have been "of the daughters of Aaron" (1:5). The future Precursor of the Great High-Priest would have the advantage of being connected through both father and mother with the priestly family of Aaron—a family which was at that time the noblest of

Israel after that of David from which was to be born the Messias. Elizabeth was also—although in what degree we know not—a relative of the Blessed Virgin Mary (1:36). This fact does not require that they should have belonged to the same tribe. The Mosaic Law, in Numbers 36:8, prescribes that only the heiresses marry within their own tribe so that the property of the tribe should not pass outside of it.

Both Zachary and Elizabeth were advanced in years. They had always carefully observed the moral precepts of natural and revealed religion. But they had no child, a privation which was regarded as a heavy misfortune because it cut off all hope of the birth of the Messias in that family. St. Luke tells us that “according to the custom of the priestly office, it was his (Zachary’s) lot to offer incense, going into the temple of the Lord” (1:9). For a proper understanding of this point, it is necessary to recall the fact that the Jewish Tabernacle and Temple had fundamentally a three-fold division: the Holy of Holies, the Holy, and the Court. The Holy of Holies enshrined the Ark of the Covenant which contained the Table of the Law, and in the beginning also the budding rod of Aaron (Numbers 17:10), and the golden urn with manna (Exodus 16:32); the latter two were no longer there in Solomon’s time (III Kings 8:9), while in the temple of Zorobabel the Holy of Holies contained—in the place formerly occupied by the Ark—only a stone on which the High-Priest placed his censer on the great day of Atonement. The Holy of Holies was separated off from the rest of the Temple by a rich, heavy veil of purple and gold sixty feet by eighty.

In the Holy there stood in the center, before the veil, the altar of incense. To the right of the altar stood the table of shewbreads (Matthew 12:4), to the left, the seven-branched candlestick (Numbers 8:1-4). The Court contained the altar of holocaust and the brazen basin or laver.

* * * * *

It is at Jerusalem, the capital of the Jewish theocracy, in the interior of the Temple, during one of the most solemn ceremonies of public worship, that the Gospel begins, thereby indicating the close connection between the New Testament and the Old. The sacrifice was offered twice every day in the name of the whole people: in the morning at the third hour (9 A.M.) and in the evening at the ninth (3 P.M.). There is no indication in St. Luke's narrative whether the episode narrated by him took place in the morning or in the evening. Perhaps the morning should be preferred, since the perpetual sacrifice then took on a more imposing character. Some authors choose the evening hour of sacrifice because that was the time when the angel Gabriel had appeared to Daniel and foretold to him the date of the Messias' coming (Daniel 9:21).

The day in question was to remain memorable for Zachary for two reasons: because of the celestial vision and because on that day he was exercising the loftiest and most coveted of priestly functions—a function which each one of the 20,000 priests who lived at the time of Christ exercised only once in his life—the offering of the burning incense. Clothed in a white linen robe, which covered his body and was gathered at the waist by a colored girdle, his head covered according to custom, his feet un-

sandaled out of respect for the holiness of the place, Zachary was still standing in front of the richly embroidered veil which shut off the Holy of Holies. He was facing the altar, made of acacia-wood and overlaid with plates of gold, on which he had just poured the precious incense. To his right was the table of the loaves of proposition, to his left the seven-branched golden candlestick. Zachary was about to prostrate himself and withdraw from the sanctuary, when a supernatural apparition stopped him. "There appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense," that is, between the altar and the golden candlestick. The angel reassured him with the words, "Fear not, Zachary," and then delivered to him the Divine message which contained the glorious promise of a son who would be endowed with eminent qualities and would become the Precursor of the Messias.

The words of the angel opened up marvelous prospects for the chosen race and especially for Zachary's promised offspring. Yet, suddenly a doubt disturbs his hopes. Can he truly count on the birth of a son? In his anxiety, he protests to the angel his advanced age and that of Elizabeth, and asks for some sign that would confirm the truth of the message. The angel grants the sign and declares that Zachary shall be mute until the birth of the promised son. The sign served at the same time as a punishment for Zachary's slowness to believe the truth announced by God's messenger.

By this time a feeling of hushed expectancy had seized upon the crowd because of the long delay of the priest within. From a feeling of reverential fear the priests never tarried in the interior of the

Temple longer than was necessary. And the priest's reappearance from before the ever-burning golden candle-stick and the veil which hid the Holy of Holies was one which powerfully affected the Jewish imagination. At length Zachary comes forth and approaches the stairs that lead to the Priests' Court. Here he should bless the people by extending his arms and pronouncing the beautiful formula in use since the time of Aaron, the brother of Moses. He attempts to speak—but in vain. From his signs and from the emotions visible in his face, the worshippers begin to suspect that he had a supernatural vision. They quietly acquiesce, knowing from sacred history that Divine interventions were ever possible, especially in the Temple.

After finishing their week of duty, the priests of the course of Abia were replaced by another class. Zachary then returned to his home—to one of the cities and towns scattered throughout Palestine, which had been assigned to the priests and levites as dwelling places. Meanwhile, Elizabeth kept her joy in silence. Henceforth, not only will her shame be ended but in the history of the Redemption she will always occupy a unique place.

THE ANNUNCIATION

The Annunciation, which took place six months after the conception of John the Baptist, is narrated by St. Luke in the following words: "And in the sixth month, the Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel being come in, said unto her: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art

thou among women" (Luke 1:26-28). The expression "being come in" denotes that the Annunciation took place within the Blessed Virgin's dwelling. More definite determination of place and time is not given us.

Before describing the mystery further, let us contemplate for a moment the principal personages—Gabriel, Joseph and Mary. Gabriel is one of the angels "who stand before God" (Luke 1:19). He announced to Daniel the time—seventy weeks—after which Christ was to come (Daniel 9:21-27). To Zachary he announced the birth of the Precursor (Luke 1:11-20). According to St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, "Gabriel was sent to contract espousals between heaven and earth." Hence the title of Pronubus which the ancients sometimes assign to the Angel Gabriel.

Joseph was of the house of David. According to many ancient writers Joseph and Joachim, the father of Mary, were brothers; this would make Joseph the uncle of Mary. It may be that, since Mary had no brothers and hence was heiress by privilege of the paternal house, she was obliged by the Mosaic Law to become the wife of one of her relatives. Yet we must beware of representing Joseph—after the manner of the apocryphal gospels—as a decrepit old man. It was in the plan of Providence that Joseph by his work should support the Holy Family, surround it with his protection, and prevent calumny or suspicion of the most chaste of spouses.

Mary also belonged to the family of David. She was probably a "sister-in-law" of the wife of Cleophas (John 19:25). The meaning of the name

of Mary, so dear to Catholic hearts, is unfortunately doubtful. Some explain "Maria" to mean *Domina* ("Sovereign") or *Stella maris* ("Star of the Sea"), or *Excelsa* ("The Sublime One") or *Myrrha* ("Myrrh"). If the name is of Hebrew origin, the most obvious explanation would be "the rebellious one" or "the bitter one"; but it does not seem probable that Jewish parents would give such a name to their daughters. Another explanation is that the word is derived from the verb "to be fat," "to be well nourished," and hence means "the beautiful one," "the perfect one"; this explanation is adopted by the German scholar Bardenhewer. The first Mary that we find mentioned in Scripture is the sister of Moses and Aaron in Egypt (Exodus, 15:20); it is possible that the name Mary is of Egyptian origin, and in that case means, "the beloved one," "the beloved of Jahve."

The angel salutes Mary as "full of grace." Protestants render this phrase as "highly favored," and consider it the proclamation of a mere extrinsic good-will which God bore toward Mary. A close examination of the original Greek text, however, makes it clear that the phrase refers to an inward supernatural reality in the soul making it acceptable to God and raising it to a close union with Him. Mary was "full of grace" in many ways: 1. In the first moment of her conception she was endowed with sanctifying grace, with all the virtues, and with all the gifts of the Holy Ghost; in other words, she was conceived immaculate. 2. By a special privilege of God she was during her whole lifetime immune from all actual sins, even the slightest ones. 3. She experienced no movements of inordinate con-

cupiscence; just as her reason was perfectly subject to God, so her lower nature was perfectly subject to reason. 4. By constant virtuous and meritorious actions, by close association with the Incarnate Word—both before and after His birth—and by an intimate participation in Christ's Passion, she increased her store of sanctifying grace in an immense degree. 5. She was "full of grace" not only intensively but also extensively; not only at the end but already at the beginning of her life Mary—the predestined Mother of God—was holier than any creature, holier than all creatures and angels taken together.

Since Mary was chosen for the greatest of works, that of the maternity of God, she enjoyed in a special degree God's protecting care and the influx of His Providence: "the Lord is with thee." As Mother of God, Mary is blessed in the superlative degree: "Blessed art thou among women." Mary, a humble Jewish maiden of a low social position, is naturally perturbed to hear herself saluted by an angel and in terms that betoken that she is a great personage with God. The angel at once dispels her fears, and then makes known the main import of his message: "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found grace (favor) with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus" (Luke 1:30-31).

When Mary heard these words, she did not doubt, as Zachary did, but asked for guidance and the necessary knowledge to cooperate adequately with the designs of the Almighty: "And Mary said unto the angel: How shall this be done, because I know not man" (Lk. 1:34)? On the ground of these

words of Mary, theologians have always argued that Mary had a vow of perpetual virginity. For at this time Mary was betrothed to a man, and that betrothal rendered lawful the conjugal right. Yet she, a betrothed virgin, alleges in effect that even to fulfill the angel's message she cannot know man.

The angel's response to Mary absolutely excludes the operation of man in Christ's conception and attributes to the power of the Holy Ghost the fecundation of Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). All the actions of God exercised upon objects outside of the Divine Essence are common to the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. But certain of these works are appropriated to the different Persons, on account of some analogy which the work bears to the property of that Person. The Incarnation, being a work of God's love toward us, is attributed to Him Who in the bosom of the Blessed Trinity proceeds by love—the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost, then, will quicken with life the thrice holy germ lying dormant in the Virgin's womb and fashion out of it the Chief of the new humanity. Christ's conception will take place without the cooperation of a human father; its sole cause will be the creative act of the Holy Ghost.

When God's design had fully entered Mary's soul, and when she uttered those tremendous words, "Be it done to me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38), at that very instant the Word became man in Mary's womb.

Discussion Aids

SET I

1. Who was ruler of the Holy Land at the time of the
 - a) apparition to Zachary;
 - b) birth of Our Lord;
 - c) return of the Holy Family from Egypt;
 - d) Crucifixion;
 - e) death of the Apostle James?
2. Explain the origin of the twenty-four courses of Jewish priests. To which course or order did Zachary belong?
3. To what family did Zachary and Elizabeth belong?
4. How was the temple of Jerusalem divided?
5. When did the apparition to Zachary take place? Where?
6. What was Zachary's reaction to the angelic message?
7. Where was the home of Zachary and Elizabeth?

SET II

1. Where did the Annunciation to Mary take place? What mystery of the Rosary commemorates this event?
2. Who was Joseph?
3. What is the meaning of the word "Mary"?
4. What is the meaning of the words, "full of Grace"?
5. What is the meaning of the words: "The Lord is with thee";

“blessed are thou among women”?

6. Did Mary have a vow of perpetual virginity?
7. By what power was the conception of Our Lord in Mary's womb to take place?
8. When did the Incarnation take place?
9. What is meant by the phrase, “Angelic Salutation”?
10. How many ideas from today's lesson are contained in the prayer, “Angelus”? Why is the prayer so called?
11. What is meant by the Christmas cycle of the Liturgy? When does it begin and when does it end? What great feasts does it embrace?

Religious Practices

1. Unlike Zachary, I will accept God's word with a prompt and unhesitating faith.
2. I will recite the words of the “Hail Mary” with the same reverence and devotion as St. Gabriel and St. Elizabeth who first spoke the principal parts of this prayer.
3. In fulfilling the Will of God, made known to me through the commandments of God and of the Church, I will imitate Mary's perfect and complete obedience to God's Will made known to her by the message of an angel.

Chapter IV

The Incarnation

Bethlehem and Nazareth were not the first homes of Jesus; His home was from all eternity in the bosom of the Father. "In the beginning," says St. John (John 1:1), "was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The Word Whom Scripture also calls Son of God proceeds from the Father by intellectual generation; He is the Father's understanding of Himself. He is the first Word ever spoken, and is in all things equal to Him by Whom He was spoken. The Father Who uttered Him is not prior to the Word, but both are equally eternal. Yes, the Incarnate Christ is older than the oldest creatures since He is at once their Creator and the Pattern after which they were created: "All things were made by Him: and without Him was made nothing that was made" (John 1:3); "In Him were all things created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominations, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him and in Him. And He is before all, and by Him all things consist" (Colossians 1:16, 17). In the beatific light of the heavenly palace, says St. Paul, the Word before His Incarnation dwelt in the "form of God," that is in a nature which—because it is Divine—cannot be acquired but is eternal (Philippians 2:6-8). Verily Christ could say of Himself, "Before Abraham was made, I am" (John 8:58).

When finally the "fullness of time" had come,

when that moment arrived which for centuries had been foreshadowed in figure, type and prophecy, the Eternal Word became Man: "When the fullness of time was come, God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem them who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Galatians 4:4, 5). When urging upon the Philippians the example of humility and unselfishness, St. Paul tells us—as it were, by accident—how the Incarnate Christ was at once God and Man: "Who being in the form of God . . . emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, becoming obedient unto death" (Philippians 2:6-8). Since the Divine nature is immutable, since the "form of God" or "nature of God" cannot be acquired, changed or lost, Christ continued to be God even after His Divine Person had placed under its dominion a human nature. And since Christ, after assuming the "form of a servant," suffered and died, He was also really and truly Man. St. Paul repeats the same doctrine when he exhorts the Corinthians to a spontaneous and affectionate generosity toward the poor: "For you know the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that being rich, He became poor for our sakes, that through His poverty you might be rich" (II Corinthians 8:9). Christ "became poor," not by "emptying" Himself of the Divine nature and attributes, which are inamissible; but rather, continuing rich inwardly as God, He appeared poor externally to men; beneath the "form of a servant" He hid the "form of God." Christ did empty Himself—of the external glory, honor and adoration due to His Divinity from reasonable creatures. Instead of appearing on earth as an absolute monarch in regal

splendor, Christ chose a life of poverty, humility, suffering and death.

St. John expresses the dogma of the Incarnation in a terse phrase which has been incorporated into the liturgy and is well known to all: "The Word was made flesh" (John 1:14). By using the term "flesh," St. John does not mean to affirm that Christ assumed a human body to the exclusion of the human soul. But in order to impress upon us the awful truth that the infinitely perfect and holy God became true Man, St. John denotes the whole human nature by its less noble component element. In fact, did not Christ Himself impress upon us the reality of His being Man by referring to Himself as "Son of Man?" But what can the formula, "The Word became flesh," exactly mean? Does it mean that the Divine nature was converted into the human nature, or that the latter was absorbed by the former? Does it mean that the two natures entered into a composition with each other, that there was a blending or commingling of the two? No, such could not have been the case. The Divine nature, which is wholly perfect, cannot be converted into something else nor can anything be converted into it—it is absolutely immutable. If the human nature, on the other hand, were absorbed by or changed into the Divine, Christ could no longer be called true Man, and the Incarnation itself would be destroyed. St. John here teaches that the Person of the Word, which from all eternity operated through the the Divine nature, placed under its dominion, at the moment of the Incarnation, and began also to operate through, a human nature. In the Incarnate Christ there are two complete natures—the Divine and human—and

the actions of both natures are attributable to one and the same Person.

Scripture frequently proclaims Christ as at once true God and true Man. Christ is conceived and born as man but at the same time He is proclaimed God's beloved Son. Christ hungers in the desert but at the same time angels minister to Him as God. He leads a humble life and is often weary but at the same time performs miracles in His own name and by His own power. He undergoes a bloody sweat and is sorrowful in the garden of Gethsemani but at the same time He restores the ear of Malchus and proclaims Himself Son of God before the judges. He is scourged and dies desolate as man but—because He is at the same time God—the sun is darkened, the veil of the temple is rent, the dead rise and He Himself rises.

When the Divine and human natures were united in the one Person of the Word, in that very instant Christ became the Head and Representative of the human race—the Head of the mystic body. Christ became what we are in order to make us—in Himself—what He is. Christ became the Son of Man in order to make the sons of men the sons of God. When He was rich He became poor for our sakes, that through His poverty we might become rich. "Him Who knew no sin, He hath made sin for us, that we might be made the justice of God in Him" (II Corinthians 5:21). He Who was eternally blessed in heaven became the Man of Sorrows in order that through His suffering we might enter into the joy of the Lord.

In this connection let us note that Christ is Head of the human race under three titles: The In-

carnation, the Redemption and sanctifying grace. All men, by the very fact of being human beings, are members of the mystic body under the first two titles. But to become members of the mystic body in the full sense by participating in sanctifying grace—for this, a baptismal spiritual regeneration is needed. In fact, Christ founded the Church to confer upon men this integral membership in His mystic body by dispensing to them His atoning merits. The purpose of sacramental life is to make those who are already our brothers in Christ through His Incarnation and through His Blood, our brothers in that full sense which comes by a common corporate sharing in His Divine Life, brought to fruition by a participation in His apostolate expressed by the term Catholic Action.

Why did not the Father or the Holy Ghost, rather than the Son, become incarnate? Our feeble reason, if left to its own resources, could not demonstrate that there is more than one Person in God, much less establish which One of Them should become Incarnate. But when flooded by Divine revelation and illumined by grace, the mind can understand the eminent fitness of the Incarnation of the Second Person. Following carefully in the footsteps of the Angelic Doctor¹, let us indicate some of the reasons for the Incarnation of the Son. Since the Word created the world, the Word should also redeem the world when it fell under the domination of Satan and of sin. Since man fell from God by inordinately desiring knowledge, he should be brought back to God through Him Who was the "Wisdom of God." Since man's happiness as a rational being con-

¹ *Summa Theologica*, IIIa, q. 3, a. 8.

sists in knowledge, and his supreme beatitude will be to know God and see Him face to face, he should be brought to this happiness by Him in Whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Since Redemption and justification make us adopted sons of God, this adoptive filiation should be conferred upon us by Him Who is the natural Son of God. Since the Son holds an intermediary position, as it were, between the Father and the Holy Ghost, it was fitting that He should be the mediator between God and man. The Son proceeds from the Father by intellectual generation, He is the Father's knowledge of Himself; the knowledge of the Father should therefore be imparted to us by the Son. Finally, the Father is unbegotten and the Holy Ghost was spirated in the Divine order; it was logical that He Who was begotten in the divine nature should be begotten in the human order.

Since Christ came out of love to redeem us from our sins, why did not the Redeemer come as soon as humanity became sinful in the Fall of Adam? Although the solution to this question must ultimately be sought in God's mysterious designs, we cannot doubt for a moment that God chooses the most convenient epochs for events which in the religious history of men are at once most important and most sublime. First of all, we must remember that Adam and all men in him sinned by pride. Hence it was necessary that man be subjected to a religious training which would reveal to man how sinful and helpless he is when left to his own natural power. He had to be subjected to a discipline which would bring out all his misery and make him cry to God for mercy. Just as a man who unwittingly bears in

his breast the germ of death often presumptuously rejects the immediate aid of the physician, so too sinful humanity might have under-estimated the merciful advances of God before knowing how desirable they were. God will not confer His gifts on man a second time until man is ready to accept them as gifts. Man must learn to know that God is Master of His gifts, and that these gifts are indispensable for all generations. In order that men might worthily receive the Author of these gifts, namely, the Incarnate Word, His advent must in addition be heralded by a long line of holy men and prophets.

On the other hand, the Incarnation should not have been deferred until the end of the world. Christ came at the precise psychological moment when He could best aid our infirmity. He applied the remedy when the disease came to a head. Had the Incarnation been delayed till the end of time, all knowledge of and reverence for God, as well as all morality, would have disappeared from the world.

What was the relation of the Incarnation to Mary? By the Incarnation Mary became the Mother of God. At the Annunciation the Archangel Gabriel said to Mary: "Thou shalt *conceive* and *bring forth* a son, he shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High" (Luke 1:31). If Mary's son is God, Mary is the mother of God. In fact, at the Visitation Elizabeth, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, exclaimed: "Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me" (Luke 1:43)? By His generation in the bosom of the heavenly Father, Christ is the true Son of God. By His generation in time from the Virgin Mary, He is the true Son of Mary. But in Christ there is only

one, undivided divine Person. Hence the Son of God and the Son of Mary are one and the same Person—Christ is God, and Mary is the Mother of God.

Mary is the greatest saint of the New Testament because no one was so intimately associated with the Incarnation as she. She voluntarily conceived, gave birth to, and nourished Christ. Our Lord derived from her the very flesh and blood of His body.

Because Christ, the Source and meritorious Cause of all graces, came to us through Mary, Mary is called the Mediatrix of all graces. She freely consented to the Incarnation. She conceived, gave birth to, and nourished the body of Christ. She prepared the Divine Victim for the immolation, and standing beneath the Cross offered Him for the salvation of mankind. She was intimately associated with Our Lord in the *acquisition* of graces.

Is she mediatrix of all graces also in the sense that she participates now in the dispensation and *distribution* of the graces from the Risen Christ to us? Does she effectively intercede for each and every grace given to every man on earth? Does every grace, irrespective of her intercession, pass through her hands before it reaches the soul? These are questions which are open to theological discussion but on which the Church has not pronounced infallibly.

Discussion Aids

1. Did Christ exist before the Incarnation? Explain.
2. How does the Son proceed from the Father?

3. Are the Father and Son and Holy Ghost equal in all things? Why?
4. What is meant by the "fullness of time?"
5. Prove that Christ was true God and true Man.
6. Of what did Christ "empty" Himself in the Incarnation?
7. What is the meaning of the words: "The Word was Made Flesh?" Give a full explanation.
8. Show that Christ conducted Himself at once as God and as Man.
9. What is meant by the headship of Christ? Under how many titles is Christ our head?
10. Why did not the Father or the Holy Ghost, rather than the Son, become our head?
11. Why did not the Incarnation take place immediately after the Fall?
12. Why was it not delayed till the end of the world?
13. What is Mary's relation to the incarnation? Why does Mary's motherhood of Christ make her the Mother of us all?
14. How does the Incarnation increase reverence for childhood and womanhood?
15. On what two feasts of the year does the priest kneel down at High Mass while the choir sings: "Et incarnatus est" ("and He became Incarnate")?
16. By what words did Mary bring the Son of God down upon earth? By what words does the priest bring Him down upon the altar?
17. Where in the Mass do the words occur:

“Et Verbum caro factum est” (“And the Word was made flesh”)? What religious sentiments should animate us when we utter these words?

Religious Practices

1. I will be humble and obedient after the example of Our Lord Who “being in the form of God—emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being obedient unto death.”
2. I will be generous in imitation of Christ Who “Being rich, became poor for our sakes”.
3. I will strive to attain spiritual perfection not by natural means but with the help of God’s grace.

Chapter V

Duration of the Hypostatic Union

1. The Hypostatic union means the union of the human and Divine natures in and under the one person of the Word, so that Christ is true God and true Man. When at the Annunciation the angel had concluded his heavenly message, and when the Blessed Virgin had pronounced the assenting words, "Be it done to me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38), at that moment the Son of God was, through the supernatural activity of the Holy Ghost, conceived in Mary's Womb. The conception of Christ implies three factors: the creation of Christ's human soul; the infusion of that soul into and union with Christ's body which had been fashioned and prepared for its reception by the activity of the Holy Ghost; and, lastly, the assumption of that human nature by the Person of the Word. These three events were simultaneous: not the slightest fraction of time intervened between them. The human nature of Christ never had its connatural human personality—there were not two persons in Christ—but as soon as Christ's human nature was constituted by the union of His soul and body, at that very instant it was placed under the dominion of the Person of the Word. The Divine Person, Who contained within Himself in an eminent manner all the perfections of a human personality, communicated to that human nature His own existence and made it intimately His own. Henceforth the Incarnate Word could say in all truth: I walk, I suffer, this is my body.

This doctrine is well expressed by St. Leo the

Great¹, and by Pope St. Gregory in his letter to the bishops of Ireland², both of whom say in substance: "The human nature of Christ was not first created and then assumed (by the Person of the Word), but it was created in the very act of being assumed". As a matter of fact, the Son Whom the Blessed Virgin conceives and to Whom she gives birth, is at the same time represented and declared in the Gospels to be the Son of God: "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the *Son of the Most High*" (Luke 1:31-32). Shortly after the Annunciation Elizabeth, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, saluted Mary as the Mother of God: "And whence is this to me, that the *mother of my Lord* should come to me" (Luke 1:43)?

2. What, it may be asked, happened to the hypostatic union during the triduum of Christ's death? The Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, which are infallible documents of faith, tell us that after His death Christ descended into hell and that He was buried. These statements presuppose that the Word remained united both to the soul which descended into the limbo of the just and to the body which was buried in the sepulchre. Besides, death could take place without destroying the hypostatic union, for death did not consist in a separation of the humanity from the Divinity but in a separation of the soul from the body. Hence the soul and the body could be separated from each other without being disjoined from the Word.

At this point several interesting questions im-

¹ Epist. 35 ad Julianum, c. 3; P. L. LIV.

² Denziger, *Enchiridion*, 250.

mediately arise. How could Christ's body in the sepulchre be united to the Word, the Source and Fountain of all life, and yet be dead and lifeless? The solution to this problem lies in a proper understanding of the manner in which God is the Author of life. The Word, it is true, is the Source of all life in the universe, especially of that of the human soul. As far as the human body is concerned, the Divine disposition by creation is such that the body lives only when united to the soul. Hence although the Word is the Source of all life, it does not vivify the body except through the soul. Since Christ's body in the tomb was separated from the soul—although united to the Word—it was not a living body.

During the Sacred Passion, our Lord shed His blood with great profusion and generous prodigality. The various stages of the Passion and especially of the Way of the Cross constituted a veritable procession of the Precious Blood. The question whether every single drop of Christ's blood, shed during the Passion remained hypostatically united to the Person of the Word during the triduum, was debated during the Middle Ages with great vehemence and vigor between members of the Franciscan and Dominican Orders. The prevailing opinion among theologians today is to the effect that during the triduum of Christ's death, the Person of Christ remained hypostatically united at least with that portion of His Precious Blood which He re-assumed at the Resurrection³.

Bruges, Beyreuth, Jerusalem and several other places maintain or at one time claimed to possess

³ St. Thomas, Quodlibetales, q. 3. a. 5.

true relics of Christ's Precious Blood. If these relics are true, is the blood of Christ which they contain still united to the Person of Christ? Is it consequently deserving of Divine worship? This problem has likewise been the subject of extensive and prolonged discussion. At present the generally accepted doctrine is the following: If these relics are the blood shed by our Lord during His Passion, these particles of Christ's Blood were not reassumed at the Resurrection but permanently separated from Christ's Person; they are not to be worshipped but only venerated like particles of the Holy Cross.

The blood which is said to have flown miraculously from consecrated Hosts or images of Christ is not the blood of Christ at all. Since the Resurrection, Christ is in a glorified state and "dieth now no more". Hence He cannot bleed in a consecrated Host where He is present in the same glorified state. If a fluid, the chemical ingredients of which are the same as those of human blood, should appear on the consecrated Host, the phenomenon would be a miracle—a didactic miracle teaching us the truth of the Real Presence.

Since the Holy Eucharist was established on the night of Holy Thursday, and since the regular celebration of Mass did not begin until some time after the Resurrection, theologians inquire what would have been the state of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist if the Apostles had consecrated on 1) Good Friday morning, 2) Holy Saturday morning, 3) Easter morning?

1) If the Apostles had consecrated on Good Friday morning, Christ Who at that time was in Himself passible would have been in the Holy Eu-

charist in an impassible manner. "It is clear", says St. Thomas, "that the very body of Christ which was perceived in its own nature by the disciples was also received in the sacramental species. The body which was perceived in its own nature was not impassible but rather prepared for the Passion. But that which in itself was passible was in an impassible manner in the Sacrament, just as that which in itself was visible existed invisible."⁴

2) Let us suppose now that the Apostles had celebrated the Lord's Supper on Holy Saturday morning. At this time there existed a real separation between the constitutive elements of Christ. The Sacred Host would have contained (in an impassible manner) the bloodless, inanimate Body of Christ as it lay in the tomb. The Chalice would have held only the blood separated from His body during the Passion and absorbed by the earth. Both the body and the blood would have remained hypostatically united to the Divine Person. Christ's soul, sojourning in limbo, would have remained entirely excluded from the Eucharistic presence.

3) If the Apostles had consecrated on Easter morning after Christ's Resurrection, Christ would have been in the Holy Eucharist in the same state as He is now—namely, in a glorified state. Christ Who "dieth now no more" has an animate body through whose veins courses His life's blood under the vivifying influence of the soul. Christ is present in each species wholly and entirely—body, blood, soul, humanity and Divinity.

3. The hypostatic union will continue after the Resurrection for all eternity. The perpetual in-

⁴ Summa Theologica, IIIa, q. 81, a. 3.

separability of our Lord's two natures is implied in Christ's eternal priesthood. The eternal existence of Christ is taught in the following passage in Hebrews: "Jesus Christ, yesterday, and today, and the same forever" (Hebrews 13:8). That the Apostle in this passage means the God-Man is evidenced by his teaching in regard to Christ's eternal priesthood: "But this (Christ), for that He continueth forever, hath an everlasting priesthood" (Hebrews 7:24). Since the exercise of Christ's priesthood is a theandric act, it necessarily presupposes the hypostatic union; and since Christ's priesthood is to endure forever, the hypostatic union itself will never cease. The exalted celestial priesthood of our Pontiff is not a mere empty title, but a complement of the Sacrifice of the Cross. Christ appears before His Father as the Victim of Calvary and adorned with the qualities of victim. He constantly presents to His Father the merits of His blood shed upon Calvary—everlastingly He is asserting the sacrifice of the Cross in behalf of those whom He redeemed. As St. Ambrose remarks: "He refused to relinquish the wounds which He had received for us, but preferred to take them with Him to Heaven, in order to exhibit them to his Heavenly Father as the purchase price of our liberty."⁵ In this way Christ is "always living to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25).

⁵ In *Luc. X*, n. 170.

Discussion Aids

1. What is the hypostatic union?
2. What three factors does the Incarnation involve?

3. Did Christ ever have a human person?
4. How could a divine Person take the place of a human person?
5. What happened to the hypostatic union during the three days after Christ's death?
6. How could the body of Christ be united to His Person and still be dead?
7. Did all the Precious Blood shed during the Passion and Death of Christ remain hypostatically united to His Divine Person?
8. Are the relics of the Precious Blood deserving of Divine worship?
9. Can the Risen or Eucharistic Christ bleed?
10. What would have been the state of Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist if the Apostles had consecrated on:
 - a) Good Friday morning;
 - b) Holy Saturday morning?
 - c) Easter morning?
11. Will the hypostatic union last forever?
12. In what sense is Christ making intercession for us in heaven?
13. Show how the hypostatic union is reproduced in the Holy Eucharist?
14. When you recite the Litany and prayers to the Sacred Heart, whither should you direct your petitions (where is the Sacred Heart of Christ now)?

Religious Practices

1. I will have a great respect for the human body which was raised to so high a dignity in the hypostatic union.
2. I will try to understand the oneness of

Christ's Person and realize that the Christ Who is now present in the Blessed Sacrament is the very Christ Who suffered for me in Palestine.

3. I will cultivate a great devotion to the Five Wounds and ask that they would plead for me in the presence of the Blessed Trinity.

Chapter VI

The Virgin Birth

It is a matter of Catholic faith that Mary was a Virgin at the conception and at the birth of Christ, and that she always remained a virgin after the birth of Christ. The virginal conception of our Lord denotes a conception without the cooperation of a human father. The thrice holy germ in Mary's womb, out of which the Chief of the human race was fashioned, received from the miraculous activity of the Holy Ghost its impetus to become animated, to grow and to develop. This supernatural influence of the Holy Ghost extended to the birth of Jesus Christ, preserving Mary's integrity and causing Christ to pass through the barriers of nature without injuring them. The doctrine of the virginal conception and birth of Christ is found in the Nicene Creed as well as in the oldest forms of the Apostles' Creed. It has always been the constant and uniform tradition of the Church, and is taught explicitly by Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Justin Martyr, Aristides and St. Ignatius. It is formulated in the Roman Catechism, in some Protestant Confessions and apparently in the Catechism of the Socinians, which considers the birth of Christ miraculous without explicitly declaring the virginity of Mary.

The two Evangelists of Christ's virginal conception are St. Matthew and St. Luke. In the accounts of both writers, an angel announces the heavenly origin of the Infant even before He is conceived:

“Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 1:20); “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy Which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). St. Luke twice repeats that Mary was a virgin at the time of the Annunciation, and consequently at the time of the Incarnation; the Angel Gabriel was sent “to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David, and the Virgin’s name was Mary” (Luke 1:27). The angel, wishing to give Mary a proof that nothing is impossible to God, informs her that Elizabeth, notwithstanding her advanced years, is to have a son. He represents the birth of John the Baptist as something miraculous. But of what import would be these words of the angel, if Mary were to bring forth a son under ordinary conditions? Did not the angel imply that Christ’s conception would be more miraculous than John’s? Was the Messiah to be placed in a position of relative inferiority to His Precursor?

In their genealogies the two Evangelists expressly imply that Joseph’s relation to Mary’s Son was that of a legal or foster father. In the one case it is said: “Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ” (Matthew 1:16). In the other it is stated that “Jesus Himself was beginning about the age of thirty years, being, (as it was supposed,) the son of Joseph” (Luke 3:23).

In the episodes of the Magi and of the flight to Egypt St. Matthew repeatedly asserts that Christ

is the Child of Mary and not of Joseph, and represents Joseph as simply the guardian and protector of them both. "And entering into the house, they found the Child with Mary His mother, and falling down they adored Him" (Matthew 2:11): "And after they were departed, behold an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise, and take the Child and His mother, and fly into Egypt" (Matthew 2:13); "Who arose, and took the child and His mother by night, and retired to Egypt" (Matthew 2:14, 20, 21). It is noteworthy that in all these passages the angel who addresses Joseph concerning our Lord, never refers to the latter as "thy child."

The supernatural activity of the Holy Ghost extended to the birth of Christ. As a ray of light penetrates a crystal without injuring it, as the risen Christ entered into the midst of the disciples through closed doors, so He also came forth from His mother's womb without any injury to her virginity. His birth was accompanied by no injury to Mary's organs, no pangs nor throes of childbirth. It did not introduce those physiological conditions which would place Mary—at least materially—in a state of non-virginity, conditions which presuppose and follow from natural conception. In affirming the doctrine of the Virgin Birth, the Fathers appeal to the following passage in Isaias: "A virgin shall conceive and bear a Son" (Isaias 7:14); in this passage "virgin" is the subject of both verbs—Mary was a virgin in the birth of Christ as well as in the conception of Christ. The Purification (Luke 2:22) offers no difficulty to this doctrine. The sacred writer cites a provision of the Mosaic Law to which

Mary in all humility and obedience submitted. The virginal conception and birth were as yet known to only a very few. In addition, the Mosaic Law required that every first-born be consecrated to the Lord.

Theology advances several reasons to show why Christ was born of a virgin. The First Person of the Blessed Trinity is the real and true Father of Christ; it would be unbecoming that He transfer His dignity to a mere man. Secondly, it was fitting that He Who was born in a virginal manner in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, should also be born in a perfect virginal manner in time. Thirdly, Christ wished to avoid the mode of man's procreation which is infected with original sin. He decreed not to incur that taint He had come to destroy. Born of a virgin who was conceived without sin, He was clothed with a pure and holy flesh. He was a Man as we are but without semblance or stain of sin.

In the bitter controversy which a few years ago ensued between the Fundamentalists and Modernists, the Virgin Birth was one of the first doctrines attacked and rejected by the latter. Now, on what arguments do the Modernists rely? In the first place, they call attention to the fact that St. Luke in three places makes mention of the Saviour's "parents" (Luke 2:27, 41, 43). These passages, however, can hardly be construed as contradicting St. Luke's doctrine concerning the Virgin Birth. Having once described the virginal conception of Christ, St. Luke did not deem it necessary to be forever repeating that Jesus was not the real son of Joseph. Besides, St. Joseph by his marriage to

the Blessed Virgin was a legal and fosterfather of Christ, and as such had real paternal rights. It is possible, too, that in these passages the Evangelist is speaking from the viewpoint of the multitudes who were unacquainted with the mystery of the Incarnation.

At the finding in the Temple Mary says to her Son: "Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee" (Luke 2:48). Since the Blessed Virgin was speaking in the hearing of strangers who did not know of the Virgin Birth, Mary refers to Joseph as the "father" of Christ; any insinuation that Joseph was not the real father of Christ would have immediately aroused serious suspicions in the minds of the Jews. Besides, in the reply which Christ gave to His mother saying "Do you not know that I must be about my Father's business", do not the words, "My Father", constitute a very strong argument in favor of the supernatural conception of Christ?

The Modernists also call attention to the following remarks concerning the Saviour, recorded in the Gospel: "Is not this the carpenter's son?" (Matthew 13:55); "Is not this the son of Joseph?" (Luke 4:22); "We have found him of whom Moses did write, Jesus, the son of Joseph of Nazareth" (John 1:45); "Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" (John 6:42). These examples reflect the popular opinion which went by appearances and which knew nothing of the Virgin Birth. They were terms used by the public to characterize a situation which it understood only superficially. They do not express the conviction and teaching of the sacred writers. The Evangelists well

knew that these statements—inserted into their narratives—would be easily understood by the reader.

In 1892 a Syriac manuscript of the Gospels—seemingly of very great antiquity—was found in the library of the monastery of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai. This *Codex Syrus Sinaiticus*, as it is called, was discovered by Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Gibson. According to this manuscript, Matthew 1:16 reads: "Joseph, to whom was espoused Mary the Virgin, begot Jesus who is called Christ". The Modernists immediately hailed this reading as an important argument against the Virgin Birth. One codex, however, cannot prevail against all the rest. Furthermore, in the immediate context we read that Mary conceived Christ through the operation of the Holy Ghost. Hence, one solution would be to posit a contradiction in the version although this is not very probable. Possibly "begot" is a slip of the scribe who mechanically repeated the verb "begot" in place of "was begotten" or "was born". Most probably the verb "begot" is taken here in a legal sense and refers to Joseph's legal paternity. For Joseph was a legal husband of Mary and an adoptive father of Christ, and as such enjoyed all the rights and privileges of a father.

Some writers point to the silence of St. Mark, St. John and St. Paul concerning the virginal conception. The Gospels, however, were not systematic biographies, but each one of them was called forth by a specific purpose in the mind of the author. The silence of St. Mark causes no difficulty since he does not speak of the birth of Christ at all. St. John knew and used the Synoptics. St. Ignatius, who was a contemporary of St. John and lived in the same country, and whose writings are permeated

with Johannine ideas and phraseology, repeatedly speaks of the Virgin Birth. There may be a reference to the Virgin Birth in John 1:14: "And the Word was made flesh". St. Paul's Epistles were not systematic treatises of theology but letters evoked by the needs of the missions. St. Paul was a friend of St. Luke, and hence we have every reason to believe that the Apostle knew and accepted the doctrine. There may be an allusion to Christ's virginal conception in Galatians 4:4: "Made of a woman, made under the law." Finally, we must remember that the mystery of the Holy Family was not generally known in Nazareth and among the early Christians. Christ Himself did not refer to it in His public preaching since it would have exposed Him and His mother to public criticism.

Not much need be said of those theories which derive the Virgin Birth from contemporary heathenism. The early Christians manifested so profound an abhorrence for heathenism that it is antecedently improbable that they would have borrowed from the immoral mythologies of paganism. Besides, the differences between the Virgin Birth and the legendary origin of the pagan deities and heroes are so great that it is incorrect to speak of the second as parallels of the first. The strong Semitic coloring of the narratives of the Infancy shows that they arose in Palestine—in a Jewish and not in a pagan atmosphere. Since St. Matthew gives prominence to St. Joseph and St. Luke to Mary, it is probable that the account of the first Gospel goes back to St. Joseph and the Lukan narrative to the Blessed Mother (Luke 2:51).

We must carefully distinguish the Virgin Birth

of our Lord from the Immaculate Conception of Mary. The Blessed Virgin had not only a real mother but also a real father, and her conception was brought about according to the human laws of generation. But at the moment that her soul was joined to her body, God—in view of the merits of Christ—filled her soul with sanctifying grace. Whereas men receive sanctifying grace only at Baptism, and whereas John the Baptist received it at the Visitation, Mary, on the other hand, received grace at the first moment of her conception. In our case, the merits of Christ cleanse our soul from sin; in Mary's case, the merits of Christ prevented sin from entering into and tainting Mary's soul. In other words, Mary was preserved from original and from all sin.

Discussion Aids

1. What is meant by the virginal conception of Christ?
2. On what grounds is the doctrine of the virginal conception and birth of Christ based?
3. What is the teaching of St. Matthew and St. Luke concerning the virginal conception of Christ?
4. How is the miraculous birth of Christ established by a comparison with the birth of John the Baptist?
5. How is the fact that St. Joseph was only a foster-father of Christ established by
 - a) the genealogies;
 - b) the flight to Egypt?
6. What is meant by the Virgin Birth of Christ?

7. Does the Purification of the Blessed Virgin offer any obstacle to this doctrine?
8. How can reason show the fitness of the Virgin Birth?
9. Is the Virgin Birth disproved by the Scriptural reference to
 - a) Joseph and Mary as Christ's "parents";
 - b) Christ as the "son of Joseph"?
10. How explain the silence of St. Mark, St. John and St. Paul concerning the Virgin Birth?
11. Did the doctrine of the Virgin Birth arise from contemporary heathenism?
12. What is the difference between the Virgin Birth and the Immaculate Conception?
13. What is the ultimate reason why many non-Catholic sects attack the Virgin Birth?
14. Why is the modern paganistic world unable appreciate or grasp the Virgin Birth? Why is it frequently hostile to it?
15. Name the various forces at work today which are trying to destroy respect for the purity of soul and body?

Religious Practices

1. I will have a great respect for the human body which existed in a state of such absolute purity in Our Lord and in the Blessed Virgin Mary.

2. I will try to understand that the human body is good in itself but that the use we make of it is sometimes evil.

3. I will pronounce with great reverence that well known title of our Lady, "Ever-Blessed Virgin".

Chapter VII

"Ever Blessed Virgin"

Infidels who deny the supernatural conception and birth of Christ also reject the perpetual virginity of Mary. They refuse to Mary the title of "Ever Blessed Virgin" on two grounds; first, the terms "until" and "first-born" in St. Matthew's formula, "He knew her not till she brought forth her first-born Son" (Matthew 1:25); second, the various passages in the Gospels and New Testament writing where there is mention of the "brethren" of our Lord.

1. The conjunction "until" in Scriptural usage expresses what has occurred up to a certain point, and leaves the future aside. Thus God says in the book of Isaias: "I am till you grow old" (Isaias 46:4). Are we to infer that God would then cease to be? Again, God says to His Divine Son: "Sit Thou on My right hand *until* I make Thy enemies Thy foot-stool" (Psalm 109:1.) Will the Messias, once His enemies are subdued, relinquish His place of honor? St. Matthew's principal aim was to tell his readers that Christ's birth was miraculous and that Joseph had no part in the conception of Mary's child. His statement is confined to this point.

In itself the statement, "He knew her not till she brought forth her first-born Son," neither proves Mary's subsequent virginity nor contains an argument against it. Speaking as he does, the Evangelist in no wise affirms that the abstention men-

tioned by him ceased after the expiration of the time indicated. To say that the exclusion of an event up to a certain point implies that it occurred afterward, is pure cavil. In fact, one would find it difficult to believe that the sacred writer, after insisting so strongly on Mary's anterior virginity in the opening verses of the chapter, could suddenly imply that it ceased later on. If Joseph abstained from the use of the union preceding the angel's message, who could think that after Mary had brought forth the Son of God, he should feel less reverence for the temple of the Trinity?

2. It is also argued that the word "first-born" (Luke 2:7) cannot be reconciled with Mary's perpetual virginity. The word "first-born", however, is a legal term and does not imply that Mary had other children besides Christ. As St. Jerome points out, the Scriptures employ the word "first-born" to denote a mother's first child, no matter whether it is followed by other children or remains the only one; the child is called "first-born" from the fact of its opening the womb and not to contradicting it from subsequent issue; in itself the term leaves indefinite whether other children were born after him.

Among the Jews even an only son was called "first-born" because he was the object of special legislation. According to the Mosaic Law the first-born male was consecrated to God by the very fact of his birth and had to be redeemed at a price (Exodus 13:2; 34:19); Christ is called "first-born" because He "was made under the law" (Galatians 4:4) as the Apostle tells us, and because Mary and

Joseph fulfilled the Mosaic prescriptions concerning a first-born child.

3. The "brethren of the Lord" (I Corinthians 9:5) are mentioned in various passages of the Gospels and other New Testament writings. The first two Gospels mention the names of some of these "brethren", and also make reference to Christ's sisters. Here are some of the passages: "As He was yet speaking to the multitudes, behold His mother and His brethren stood without seeking to speak to Him" (Matthew 12:46; Mark 3:31; Luke 8:19); "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joseph, and Jude, and Simon? Are not also his sisters here with us" (Mark 6:3; Matthew 13:55); After this He went down to Capharnaum, He and His mother, and His brethren, and His disciples" (John 2:12, 7:3; Acts 1:14); "But other of the Apostles I saw none, save James the brother of the Lord" (Galatians 1:19). What meaning, then, are we to attribute to the terms "brethren" and "sisters" of the Lord? How interpret them consistently with Mary's vow of virginity, contained implicitly in her own words, "How shall this be done because I know not man" (Luke 1:34), and moreover affirmed explicitly in Patristic teaching on the subject?

According to the apocryphal Gospels of James, Matthew and Peter, and according to some Greek Fathers, the "brethren" were the children of Joseph from a previous marriage. This opinion, however, is now antiquated. Although it safeguards the virginity of Mary, it is opposed to the common and traditional belief in the Church concerning Joseph's perpetual virginity. As a matter of fact, there is

absolutely no trace in the Scriptures of any former marriage of St. Joseph, nor is Joseph at any time designated as the father of the "brethren" of the Lord. The Gospel story concerning the Nativity, the flight to Egypt and the finding in the Temple, clearly shows that apart from the Divine Child no other children were the object of Joseph's solicitude. Again, if St. Joseph had older sons, how could our Lord be the heir to David's throne?

The "brethren" were not real brothers of our Lord. Nowhere in the New Testament is it said that Mary bore other children besides our Lord. That Christ had no real brothers and sisters is evident from the following incidents: the flight into Egypt, the annual journey to Jerusalem, and Mary's being unaccompanied on Calvary. In all these instances there is no mention of any other children of Mary. The words of our Lord on the Cross (John 19:26) making John, a stranger, the protector of His mother, show that St. Joseph was dead and that there were no other children in the family. Christian tradition of both the East and the West is unanimous in its affirmation of Mary's perpetual virginity. The Fathers applied to Mary the words of the prophet Ezechiel, 44:2: "This gate shall be closed. It shall not be opened and no men shall pass through it because the Lord God of Israel entered in by it and it shall be closed for the prince." The early Christians were acquainted with the "brethren" several of whom—as James, the celebrated Bishop of Jerusalem—occupied important positions in the Church. If Mary had given birth to several children, how could this universal tradition arise? To ascribe the origin of this belief to

the rise of monasticism is beside the point, since the belief was prevalent long before the beginning of this movement.

The Blessed Virgin frequently appears in the company of the "brethren of the Lord", but at no time is she called their mother—not even in circumstances where such an expression would be expected (e.g. Acts 1:14). St. Mark represents the men of Nazareth speaking of our Lord as the "son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joseph, and Jude and Simon" (Mark 6:3); the Evangelist implies thereby that our Lord was the only Son of the Blessed Mother. Again, from the fact that the "brethren" occasionally assume an attitude of superiority toward our Lord, it is clear that they were older than He. Hence they were not the children of Mary, since she was a virgin when she conceived our Lord. Finally, the New Testament explicitly designates Mary of Cleophas as the real mother of James, Joseph, Jude and Simon (John 19:25; Mark 15:40; Matthew 13:55; Jude 1).

The accepted teaching of Catholic theologians is that the "brethren of the Lord" were cousins or kinsmen of our Lord. But why, then, did the sacred writers use the terms "brothers" and "sisters"—terms which give rise to such grave misunderstandings? Philology furnishes the solution. The Hebrew language is not rich in expressions and is especially poor when it tries to express degrees of relationship. It has no special word for "cousins" and hence is obligated to designate them as "brothers." According to the celebrated lexicographer, Gesenius, the Hebrew word *'ahh* is applicable not only to a brother in the strict sense

but to a nephew (Genesis 14:16), cousin (Numbers 16:10), husband (Cant. 4:9; Esther 16:12), members of the same race (Numbers 20:14), ally (Amos 1:9), friend (Job 6:15), and to those performing some duty (III Kings 9:13). Although the New Testament authors wrote in Greek and not in Hebrew, their language is merely Hebrew or Syro-Chaldaic in Greek dress; their style abounds in Hebraisms and their sentences are replete with Oriental expressions.

Our Lord and His kinsmen undoubtedly lived for some time under the same roof. Possibly after the death of Cleophas, his wife and children came to live in the house of Joseph and Mary. Or it may be that after Joseph's death, the Blessed Virgin and her Divine Son retired to the home of Mary's "sister." In these circumstances there would be additional reason for calling Christ's kinsmen His brothers. A still simpler supposition might be that after Jesus left her and began His public ministry, Mary sought the hospitality of Cleophas' home. This would explain why she appeared in the company of the "brethren," especially when she sought her Son.

A final point of interest is the precise relation of Mary, (wife of) Cleophas, to the Blessed Virgin. Enumerating the women who stood beneath the Cross, St. John writes: "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene" (John 19:25). If taken literally, the passage teaches that Mary of Cleophas was the natural sister of the Blessed Virgin; the text was understood in this sense by St. Jerome and St. Thomas Aquinas. This

explanation, however, is opposed to the ancient tradition accepted by St. John Damascene, St. Germanus and the great Jesuit theologian Suarez, according to which the Blessed Virgin was an only child, conceived miraculously from a sterile mother. In addition, the first theory fails to explain how two sisters would bear the same name. Hence the more probable explanation is that the term "sister" is used by John in a broad sense and that Mary of Cleophas was the "sister-in-law" of the Blessed Virgin, Cleophas being the natural brother of Joseph. In this case, the "brethren" would be only putative cousins of our Lord.

Discussion Aids

1. What is meant by Mary's virginity after the Birth of Christ?
2. Is the perpetual virginity of Mary disproved by the conjunction "until" in the passage, "He knew her not till she brought forth her first-born son"?
3. Is it disproved by the title "first-born" in the same passage?
4. Name some of the "brethren of the Lord".
5. Were the "brethren" the children of Joseph from a previous marriage? Why?
6. Were they Christ's real brothers and sisters? Why?
7. Were the "brethren" the cousins of our Lord? Explain.
8. What possible explanations may we give for the close association of the "brethren" of our Lord with the Mother of Christ?
9. How was St. Joseph related to Cleophas?

10. How was the Blessed Virgin Mary related to Mary of Cleophas?
11. What does your pastor mean by the words, "My dear brethren", with which he begins his Sunday sermon?
12. Give various reasons (natural and supernatural) to show that all members of the human race are brethren.

Religious Practices

I will consider all members as my "brethren" because we are all

- a) equally created by God;
- b) redeemed by Christ's Blood;
- c) and destined for heavenly glory.

Chapter VIII

The Holy Family

Marriage of Joseph and Mary

In considering the marriage of Joseph and Mary it is important to grasp from the outset the Jewish conception of the betrothal as distinguished from the marriage ceremony itself. A betrothal among the Jews was different from an engagement as we know it. The espousals were a solemn contract concerning a marriage; they were made before witnesses, and had for object the union of the parties. According to Jewish legislation, the betrothal established between the bride and the groom a legal bond much closer than with us. The betrothed woman was considered as the wife of the man from the moment of the betrothal (Deuteronomy 22:23-24), although she had not yet entered the habitation of her husband. The husband could not repudiate his betrothed without giving her a bill of divorce; in case of fornication with another man the betrothed was treated as an adulteress.

The engaged couple were given, by anticipation, the titles of husband and wife. St. Matthew likewise assigns these titles to Mary and Joseph even before the marriage ceremony had taken place: "Whereupon Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately. But while he thought on these things, behold the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: Joseph, son of

David, fear not to take unto thee (by marriage ceremony) Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 1:19-20). Ordinarily the consummation of the marriage was consequent to the marriage ceremony. Still, no imputation could be cast on the honor of a woman whose child was conceived after the espousals and before the social ceremony. Hence, in Mary's case, her honor before the people was saved by her betrothal.

When the day of the marriage arrived, the bridegroom ordered a banquet to be prepared at his house, and being dressed in festive garments and accompanied by young men of his own age, in the midst of joyous songs and the sound of musical instruments, he went to the house of the bride. The Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) gives us a vivid picture of these Oriental customs. The bride, attired in brilliant clothes, with a crown on her head, and escorted by maidens of her own age, was then led to the house of the bridegroom. This ceremony, however, was a mere social custom. It added nothing to the intrinsic nature of the marriage contract, and could be dispensed with at the will of the parties. The legality of the bond was established by the espousals.

Three months had passed since the Incarnation of the Word. Lest the reader even for a single moment entertain an unfavorable suspicion, the Evangelist frequently reminds us that Mary was "with child of the Holy Ghost". But Joseph was as yet unaware of the mystery, and hence a struggle arose in his soul. For he was a "just man", that is, a strict observer of the Divine law which was

his constant rule of conduct. Could he, a just man, marry a woman who according to appearances was guilty of grave fault? "Whereupon Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately" (Matthew 1:19). In what this "private" dismissal of Mary would have consisted, is not indicated; exegetes are of the opinion that Joseph would have given her a bill of dismissal before two witnesses without, however, indicating the cause of the dismissal, and then depart for some other region; at any rate, Joseph was determined not to expose Mary publicly, that is, not to bring her before the tribunal of the judge. At first sight it seems hard to explain Mary's silence toward St. Joseph in such serious circumstances and important matters. But her secret was God's and she thought she ought not to reveal it until God inspired her to do so. She was fully confident that the same Holy Ghost Who presided over the whole mystery would make it known to Joseph at the proper time. Then again she probably hesitated to offer an explanation which she could not prove and which might have been regarded as an arbitrary assertion.

We do not know how long this perplexity in Joseph's soul lasted. Finally, God Himself solved the vexing problem: "Behold the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 1:20). Joseph therefore was to be at ease and peace in regard to their engagement and as soon as possible contract marriage with Mary. According to Scripturists, this marriage ceremony

took place after Mary's return from the home of Elizabeth, about four months after the Incarnation of the Word.

Theology advances the following reasons to show why Christ was born of a virgin: 1. The first Person of the Blessed Trinity is the real and true Father of Christ; it was unbecoming that He transfer His dignity to a mere man. 2. Christ wished to avoid the mode of man's procreation which is infected with original sin. He Who came to satisfy for sin, decreed not to incur the taint He had come to destroy.

Theology also seeks to explain why the Redeemer was born of one legitimately united in marriage rather than from an unmarried virgin. In the first place, it was due to Mary's office to protect her honor and good name; to those who would be slow to believe that such a miracle had been wrought—and there were many such among the carnally-minded Jews—conception by an unespoused virgin could serve as a basis to impugn her character. Secondly, Mary needed the help and protection of her virgin consort in the rearing of the Divine Child. During the days of Christ's Nativity, the days of trial, poverty and even of flight to a distant region, it was becoming that the young mother should have a protector at her side. It was fitting, too that the Child should find beside His crib someone who, in the name of His only and heavenly Father, would safeguard Him, labor for His support, and initiate Him into the life of labor which He was to lead for many years.

A Davidic Family

That Joseph belonged to the house of David is

clear from the words of the angel: "Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife" (Matthew 1:20). The Davidic origin of Joseph is mentioned explicitly in connection with the edict of enrollment: "Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David" (Luke 2:4).

Mary's Davidic origin appears clearly from the angel's message: "The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father" (Luke 1:32). For Jesus to be the "Son of David" in a real sense, for the royal blood to flow in His veins, it was necessary that His mother be personally descended from the family of that ruler, because Jesus had no father according to the flesh. The Davidic origin of Mary is also insinuated in the following passages: "His Son, Who was made to Him of the seed of David, according to the flesh" (Romans 1:3); "Be mindful that the Lord Jesus Christ is risen again from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my Gospel" (II Timothy 2:8); "For it is evident that our Lord sprung out of Juda" (Hebrews 7:14). What is implicit in Scripture is made explicit in the early tradition of the Church. St. Ignatius of Antioch, St. Irenaeus, St. Justin Martyr, Tatian, Tertullian and subsequent writers represent Mary's Davidic origin with all desirable clearness. The relationship of Mary and Elizabeth does not imply that the Blessed Virgin was not a scion of the royal race. That relationship came simply from a marriage between a member of the family of David, to which the Mother of Christ belonged, and a descendant of Aaron.

The Davidic origin of Jesus Christ was never a matter of doubt. The prophets and the psalms proclaimed that through the Messiah the throne of David would endure forever. The two historians of the Sacred Infancy—St. Matthew and St. Luke—wishing to prove irrefutably to their readers, whether Jews or Greeks, that Jesus was truly descended from King David, drew up a list of His ancestors from official documents. Throughout His public life the title “Son of David” is attributed to Him by individuals as well as by the crowd. The two blind men, the Syrophenician woman, the blind man of Jericho, the enthusiastic multitude at the time of his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, appeal to Him and acclaim Him as the “Son of David”. After a miraculous cure which He had just performed, the enraptured witnesses say to one another: “Is not this the Son of David?” (Matthew 12:23; cf. Matthew 9:27; 15:22; 20:30; Mark 10:47; Luke 18:39). If the title “Son of David” did not belong to Him, why did He do nothing to undeceive and to correct the multitudes, especially when He saw that this title, accepted by Him, was arousing their enthusiasm? If Jesus was not the Son of David, how was it that His enemies did not attempt to destroy His authority either during His public life or during His trial before the Sanhedrin, by declaring and proving that He did not belong to the royal family? Later on, when the Apostles in their preaching took as their starting point the Davidic origin of their Master, no one contradicted them (Acts 2:30-36).

Although both St. Matthew (Matthew 1:1-16) and St. Luke (Luke 3:23-38) drew up a list of

Christ's ancestors, a discrepancy exists between the two lists in regard to the names between David and our Lord. Naturally we should expect to find the same names in both genealogies. But while St. Matthew gives only twenty-six names between David and our Lord, Luke has forty-one. What is more, the only names which are common to both lists are those of Salathiel and Zorobabel. According to St. Matthew, the father of St. Joseph was Jacob. According to St. Luke, St. Joseph's father was Heli. The problem created by the discrepancy between the two genealogies is almost as old as the Gospels themselves.

The oldest known explanation, attributed to Julius Africanus, is based on the Levirate Law. According to this law, when a married Israelite died without offspring, his brother or closest relative was obliged to marry the widow provided she was still of an age to become a mother. The first male child issuing from this second marriage was regarded as belonging to the deceased and became his legal heir. According to this theory, Jacob (next to the last on St. Matthew's list) and Heli (next to the last on St. Luke's list) were sons of the same mother but having different fathers, Mathan in one case, and Mathat in the other. St. Joseph, the offspring of this marriage, was actually the son of Jacob, but legally was reputed as the son and heir of Heli. The same Levirate law operated in the case of Salathiel. The two genealogies of our Lord are dissimilar, since one of them—St. Matthew's—mentions the real ancestors, while the other—St. Luke's—lists the legal ancestors of St. Joseph.

The explanation based on the Levirate Law is

not acceptable to some scholars. They question the fact that this law was still operative in our Lord's time (but cf. Matthew 22:23-28), or that it was applicable to uterine brothers, or that double genealogies were kept. Hence they propose a different solution: St. Matthew enumerates the ancestors of St. Joseph, St. Luke those of Mary; the first list contains our Lord's legal genealogy, the second, his natural and real genealogy. The scholars place the clause, "as it was supposed the son of Joseph" (Luke 3:23) in parenthesis and read: "And Jesus Himself was beginning about the age of thirty being (as it was supposed the son of Joseph but in reality a descendant) of Heli—." This explanation seems forced and less acceptable than the first. There is nothing in St. Luke's account to indicate that he intends to give Mary's genealogy. A further difficulty lies in the fact that this theory makes Heli the father of the Blessed Virgin while tradition calls him Joachim; possibly, however, Heli and Joachim may be different forms of the same name.

Discussion Aids

SET I

1. How did a Jewish betrothal differ from a modern engagement?
2. Were the betrothed given the title of husband and wife? Were they permitted marriage rights?
3. Describe a Jewish marriage ceremony. What was its value as far as the matrimonial contract was concerned?
4. Why did Joseph wish to put Mary away

privately? In what would this "private dismissal" have consisted?

5. How explain Marys' silence in regard to the manner of Christ's conception?
6. How was Joseph's perplexity solved?
7. When did the marriage ceremony take place?
8. Why did Christ wish to be born of a virgin?
9. Why was Christ born of a married virgin?

SET II

1. Prove the Davidic origin of St. Joseph. Of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
2. Show how the Davidic origin of Jesus Christ was a matter of common belief.
3. What discrepancies exist between the two genealogies of Our Lord in St. Matthew's and St. Luke's Gospels?
4. What two explanations of these differences have been advanced by Biblical scholars?
5. When is the feast of the Holy Family? Read the proper parts of the Mass.
6. Make a list of the virtues practised by the Holy Family. Show how each one of these virtues can be a light and an inspiration to every human family.

Religious Practices

1. I will have a reverent regard for womanhood which was so highly honored by the divine maternity of Mary.

2. I will frequently reflect on the sacredness of the married state which was honored by Christ's being born of one legitimately married.

3. I will frequently reflect on the dignity of family life which was sanctified by the thirty years of Christ's hidden life spent within the Holy Family at Nazareth.

Series I of Biblical Questions aims to give the student a general acquaintance with the Bible. The Chapters and Discussion Aids are constructed in such a way as to oblige the student to page the Bible, become acquainted with the arrangement of the Books, and read some sections of each Book.

Series II continues this general discussion about the Bible.

Series III takes up specific questions in the Old and the New Testament, and this method will be continued in the subsequent Series.

With the permission of the Bruce Publishing Company of Milwaukee, some of the materials in the Series are taken from our work, *Biblical Questions, Old Testament*, a book which is now out of print. We also wish to express our gratitude to St. Anthony's Guild of Paterson, New Jersey, for permission to incorporate into these booklets materials found in our volume "Biblical Questions, Vol. II: New Testament," published by the Guild, and to use its Scriptural publications in the preparation of these booklets. The Biblical texts are from the Rheims-Douay Version published by the E. M. Lohmann Company of St. Paul. In enunciating the Church's traditional and unchanging dogmatic teachings bearing upon the questions under discussion, we have used as sourcebooks J. M. Herve's *Manuale Theologiae Dogmaticae* (Paris, 1924) Vol. II, Tanquerey's *Synopsis Theologiae Dogmaticae* (Tournai, 1921) Vol. II, and our own work, *The Master Idea of St. Paul's Epistles or the Redemption* (Bruges, 1925).

THE AUTHOR

Prices Effective January 1, 1948

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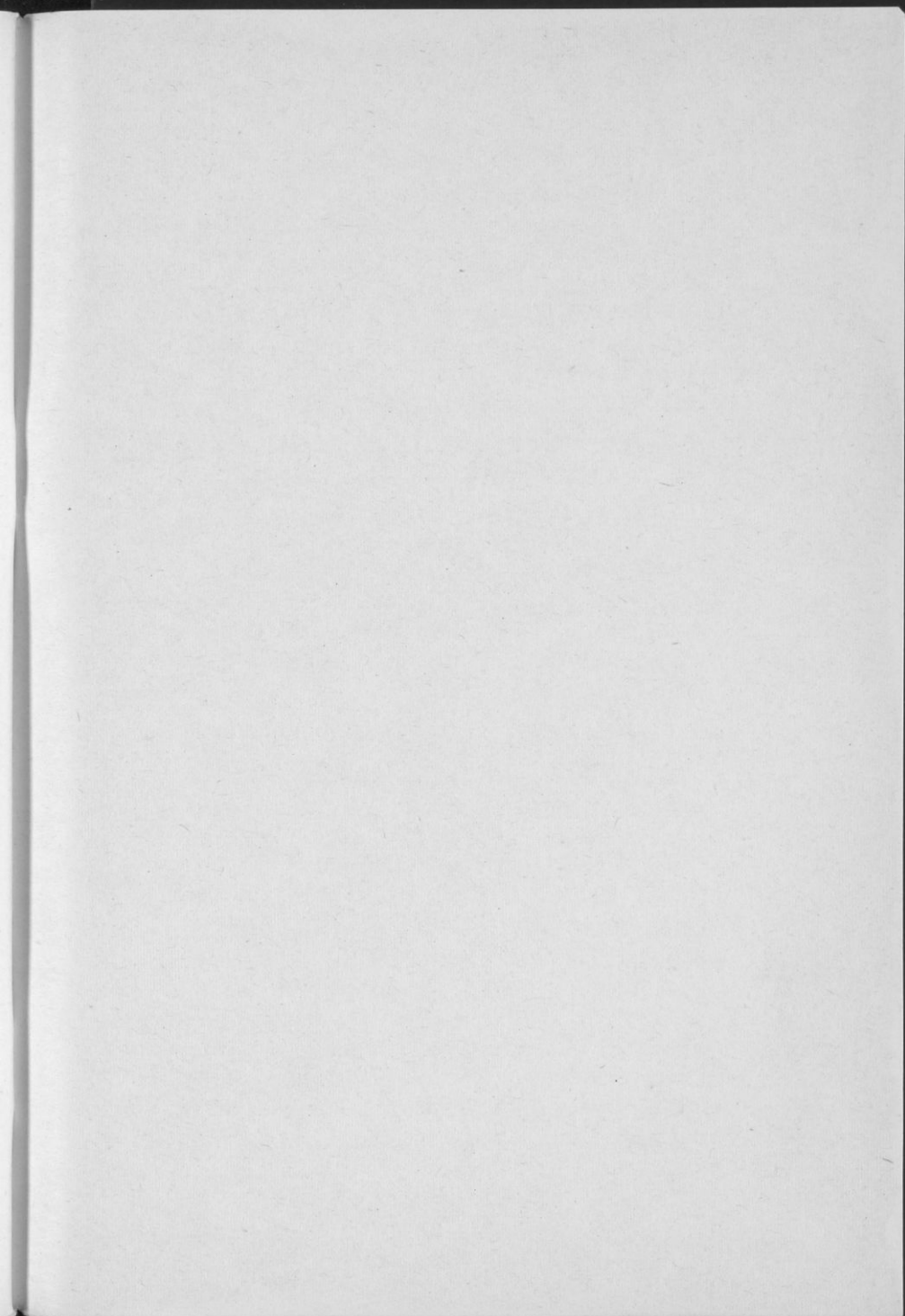
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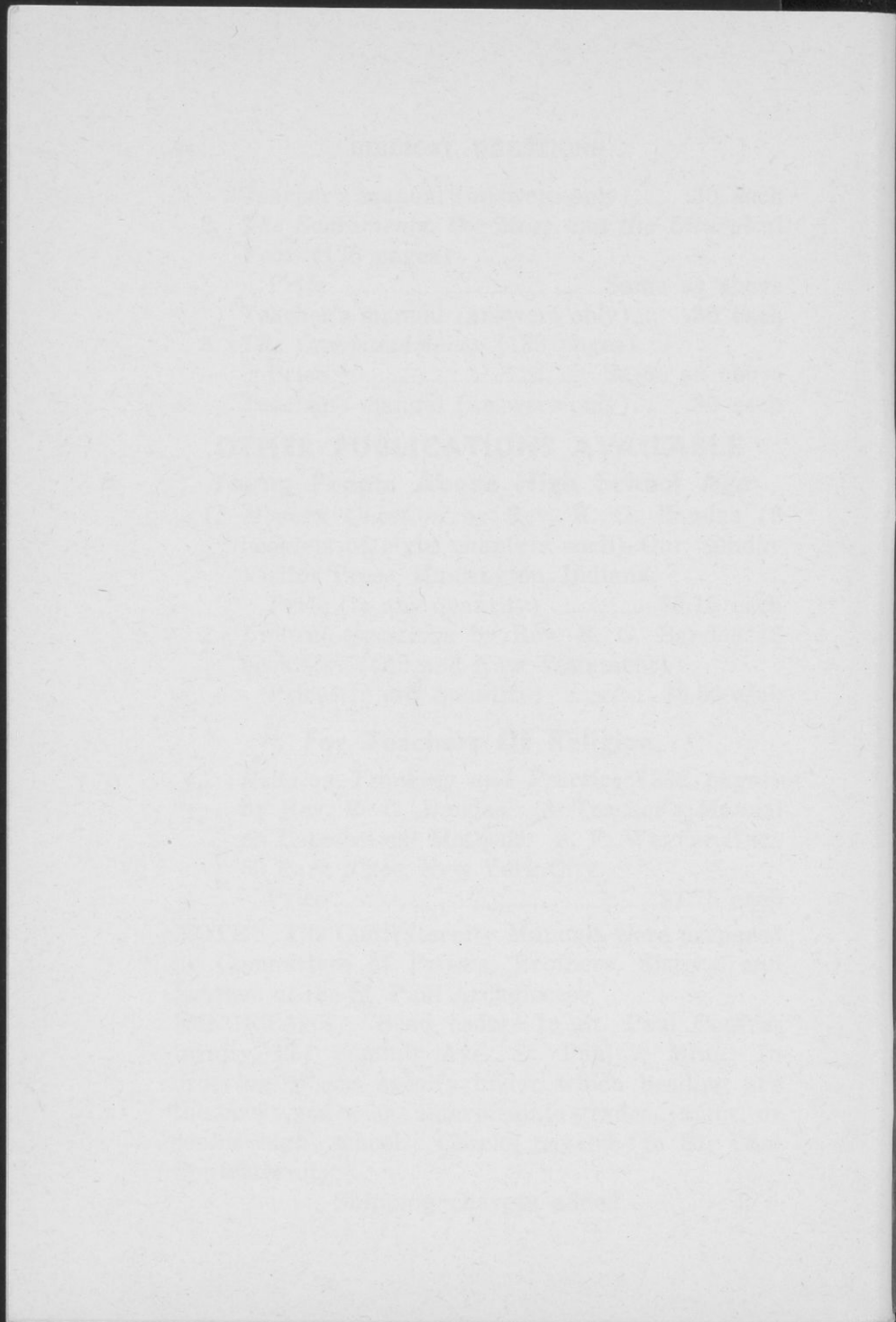
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