



SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

AIDS TO THE STUDY OF THE BIBLE
JEROME AIXALA, S.J.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

The author, a former Provincial of the Bombay Jesuits, has for 22 years been Prefect of Studies of the Jesuit Training College of Vinayalaya, Andheri, Bombay.

- "The author has performed a real service to the average Catholic layman and to students in seminaries and religious houses by providing them with a handy companion to the Bible."
- "The articles of the series *Searching the Scriptures* are enlightening and stimulating. There are many readers who follow them keenly week by week. A priest in Kerala has just written in warm appreciation and wants them to continue as long as possible. You have indeed taken great pains over your articles: they read like a piece of research written in the style of a thriller."
- "Father Aixala's series on *Searching the Scriptures* continues to be scholarly and of absorbing interest."

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SCRIPTURES

Aids to the Study of the Bible

by

JEROME AIXALA, S.J.

With a Foreword by

CARDINAL GRACIAS

Second Revised Edition

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BY

MR EUSTACE FERNANDES

**A fragment of the Commentary on
Habakkuk found at Qumran in 1947.**

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THE COUNCIL

on

Searching the Scriptures

“This sacred Synod earnestly and specifically urges all the Christian faithful, especially religious, to learn by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures the ‘excelling knowledge of Jesus Christ’ (*Phil. 3:8*). ‘For ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ’ (*St Jerome*).”

(II Vatican Council: Constitution on Divine Revelation, 25).

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Foreword

Archbishop's House

Bombay, 1-BR

June 13, 1967.

Father Aixala's book, *Searching the Scriptures*, comes at an eminently suitable time, when the Vatican Council has given a new impetus to the study of the Bible. Unfortunately, for many of us, the Bible is a closed book—to be revered as the Word of God, but not meaning very much to the average Catholic. Father Aixala has tried to help us understand the hidden riches of the Bible by reconstructing the background against which the events narrated in the Bible took place. This background, both religious and political, is an indispensable tool in the hands of one who would savour the richness of the Sacred Text.

Readers of *The New Leader*, who enjoyed Father Aixala's articles that were published serially in that paper, will be glad to have them now in book form. The particular merit of the author lies in the fact that he has collected into one book information on a variety of subjects, for which one would normally have had to go to several publications. He has, furthermore, the ability to put across his message in good and readable English, avoiding technical language and too scholarly a treatment of his subject-matter. In this way, he has performed a real service to the average Catholic layman and to students in seminaries and religious houses by providing them with a handy companion to the Bible.

In recommending this book to the public, I pray that the readers may be encouraged to read the Word of God itself. The best reward the author could claim for his labours would be a new interest in the Bible and a keener desire on the part of the reader to relish to the full the Sacred Text itself.

+ Valerian Cardinal Gracias

(+ VALERIAN CARDINAL GRACIAS)
Archbishop of Bombay

Preface

This book collects articles that appeared last year in 52 consecutive issues of the Madras Catholic weekly, *The New Leader*. Some sections were also published in the Bombay *Examiner*. Through the kindness of the Editors I am now able to satisfy the desire of some readers who suggested that the series be published in book form. With considerable alterations and substantial additions, the articles of a weekly review have now become chapters of a book. This book may serve as a background to the study of some aspects—textual, religious and political—of the sacred writings, particularly of the New Testament.

* * *

Obviously this is not a book from a biblical *scholar* for biblical *scholars*, unless the term is understood to mean Scripture *students*. Today, in the post-conciliar era, every son and daughter of the Church is expected to be a biblical student.

Among the many blessings that the Second

Vatican Council has bestowed upon us, we must reckon the renewed appreciation, study, and use of Holy Scripture. The conciliar documents inculcate frequently the right use, the faithful translation, the study and meditation, the solid explanation and preaching of the Word of God.

The directives of the Council urge *bishops* to instruct the faithful on the right use of the sacred books, especially the New Testament, and above all the Gospels (Const. on Divine Revelation, art. 25). *Priests* and other officially appointed teachers must hold fast to the Sacred Scriptures through diligent reading and careful study (Revelation, art. 25). Members of *religious communities*, drawing on the authentic sources of Christian spirituality, should sedulously cultivate the spirit and practice of prayer, primarily by the daily reading and meditation of the Word of God (Decree on the Religious Life, art. 6). *Seminary professors* and *students* are reminded that Sacred Scripture ought to be the soul of all theology (Decree on Priestly Formation, art. 16).

All the faithful should have easy access to the reading and study of the sacred books, which should be accompanied by prayer (Revelation, art. 22). They should gladly put themselves in touch with the sacred text itself, whether it be through the liturgy, rich in the divine word, or through devotional reading and suitable instructions (Revelation, art. 25).

The Church herself is concerned to progress daily towards a deeper understanding of the Sacred Scriptures so that she may unceasingly feed her

children with the food of the Word of God (Revelation, art. 23). This she does by encouraging suitable and correct translations into various languages especially from the original texts (Revelation, art. 22); also through a greater use of the inspired texts in the liturgical celebrations, through the homily at Mass, and through Bible services.

* * *

For the spelling of Hebrew biblical names, I have adhered—consistently, I hope—to the original form long in vogue among Jewish and Protestant writers and editors, and now adopted in the Catholic edition of the Revised Standard Version and in the Jerusalem Bible.

I gratefully acknowledge the patient and skilled labour of Father Daniel Donnelly, S.J., who carefully went through the entire manuscript and suggested numerous corrections and improvements.

As Cardinal Gracias suggests in the Foreword he has graciously written for this book, the author will be highly pleased if these pages encourage some reader to read a little more frequently and a little more prayerfully the Sacred Text of God's Word, the Book of books.

J. A.

*Vinayalaya Training College
Andheri, Bombay 69.*

*Feast of Saint Jerome
30 September 1967.*

A WORD ABOUT THIS SECOND EDITION

The first edition of this book was exhausted several years ago. But the love of Christians for the Word of God and its study, far from diminishing, seems to be growing from year to year.

The publishers of this Aids to the Study of the Bible felt that they should satisfy the demand for such a book from individual Catholic readers as well as from seminaries, religious communities and various Bible study groups existing in the country.

This edition has been printed by offset and the type-setting has been done by photo-composition in a convenient font, face and size.

The text has been updated where necessary. Brief additions were called for chiefly in the chapter on modern versions of the Scriptures including Indian vernaculars.

We are grateful to friends who indicated errors in the first edition or suggested possible improvements.

J. A.

*St Xavier's High School
Bombay
Christmas 1981*

THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

*Old Testament**New Testament*

Genesis	Proverbs	Matthew
Exodus	Ecclesiastes	Mark
Leviticus	Song of Solomon	Luke
Numbers	Wisdom	John
Deuteronomy	Sirach	Acts of the Apostles
Joshua	(Ecclesiasticus)	Romans
Judges	Isaiah	1 Corinthians
Ruth	Jeremiah	2 Corinthians
1 Samuel	Lamentations	Galatians
2 Samuel	Baruch	Ephesians
1 Kings	Ezekiel	Philippians
2 Kings	Daniel	Colossians
1 Chronicles	Hosea	1 Thessalonians
2 Chronicles	Joel	2 Thessalonians
Ezra	Amos	1 Timothy
Nehemiah	Obadiah	2 Timothy
Tobit	Jonah	Titus
Judith	Micah	Philemon
Esther	Nahum	Hebrews
Job	Habakkuk	James
Psalms	Zephaniah	1 Peter
	Haggai	2 Peter
	Zechariah	1 John
	Malachi	2 John
	1 Maccabees	3 John
	2 Maccabees	Jude
		Revelation
		(Apocalypse)

Prologue

SEARCHING THE CHRIST OF THE SCRIPTURES

Imperative or Indicative?

Searching for a general title for this series of brief and unpretentious studies on various aspects of the Holy Scriptures, we thought of that passage in St John's Gospel, where Jesus, after healing the cripple on a Sabbath day, was confronted by some scribes and pharisees, who pretending great zeal for the observance of the Law, upbraided him for what they chose to regard as his flagrant violation of the Sabbath.

In his reply our Lord proves his divinity and claims his Messianic mission. In doing this, he adduces the testimony of the Scriptures, which speak of nothing if not of Christ. "You pore over the Scriptures, thinking to find eternal life in them (and indeed, it is of these I speak as bearing witness to me): but you will not come to me, to find life" (Jn 5:39).

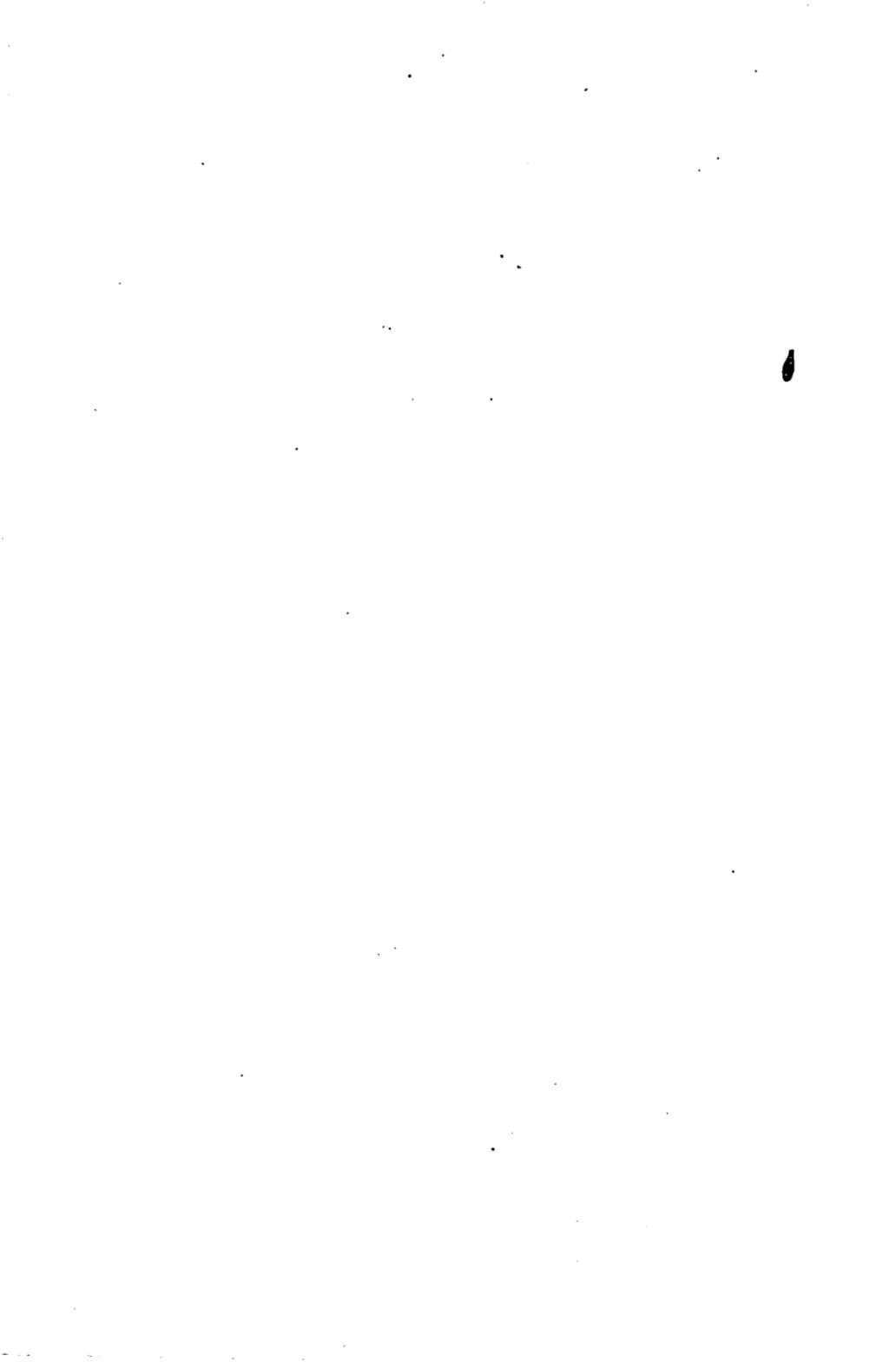
The first clause, rendered here by the Revised Standard Version (Catholic edition) as “you search the scriptures”, and by Knox as “you pore over the Scriptures”, was in the Douay version “Search the Scriptures.” This latter was the form with which we were familiar. The verb in the Greek original (corresponding to the technical Hebrew *daras* used for Scripture study) is *eraunate*, which St Jerome’s Vulgate has accurately rendered *scrutamini*. This, however, leaves the door open to discussion.

It so happens that both the Greek and the Latin verbal forms here can be either in the imperative mood or in the indicative. Taking it as a command or invitation to delve into the Sacred Scriptures, we thought it an appropriate title for this book. We soon found, however, as a result of some delving into translations and commentaries that, although this was the common interpretation of the Fathers of the Church (with the sole exception of St Cyril of Alexandria) and of the more ancient commentators up to the Renaissance period, most modern scholars are inclined to think that the Greek *eraunate* (just as the Latin *scrutamini*), is not so much an *order* or *challenge* to search the Scriptures, as a *positive statement* by which Jesus reproaches with a slight touch of irony the scribes and doctors of the Law (whom he admits to study the sacred text in its minutest details, as if this very process were to bring them eternal life) for refusing to recognize that the Scriptures themselves point to Christ as the only life-giver. This interpretation seems to suit the line of argument

better. (See study by M.E. Boismard, O.P., in *Revue Biblique*, LV, 1948 pp. 5-34). Christ does not condemn the study of the sacred writings; he condemns an exclusive concern for the letter of the Law interpreted by men who ignored the main trend of the salvation history of the old dispensation, which was but a preparation for the coming Messiah, for him, whom Philip assured Nathanael to be the same whom Moses and the prophets had written about (Jn 1:45).

According to most modern translations and many modern commentaries, therefore, this passage is not so much an invitation to search the Scriptures as an invitation to search Christ in the Scriptures. Detailed historical, geographical, archaeological, exegetical and etymological knowledge of the Bible is of itself of no avail to take us one step nearer to God. As the first chapter of the *Imitation of Christ* puts it, "if you had the whole of Scripture and all the maxims of the philosophers at your finger-tips, what would be the use of it all, without God's love and God's grace? How is it that so many of us can hear the Gospel read out again and again with so little profit? Because they haven't got the spirit of Christ."

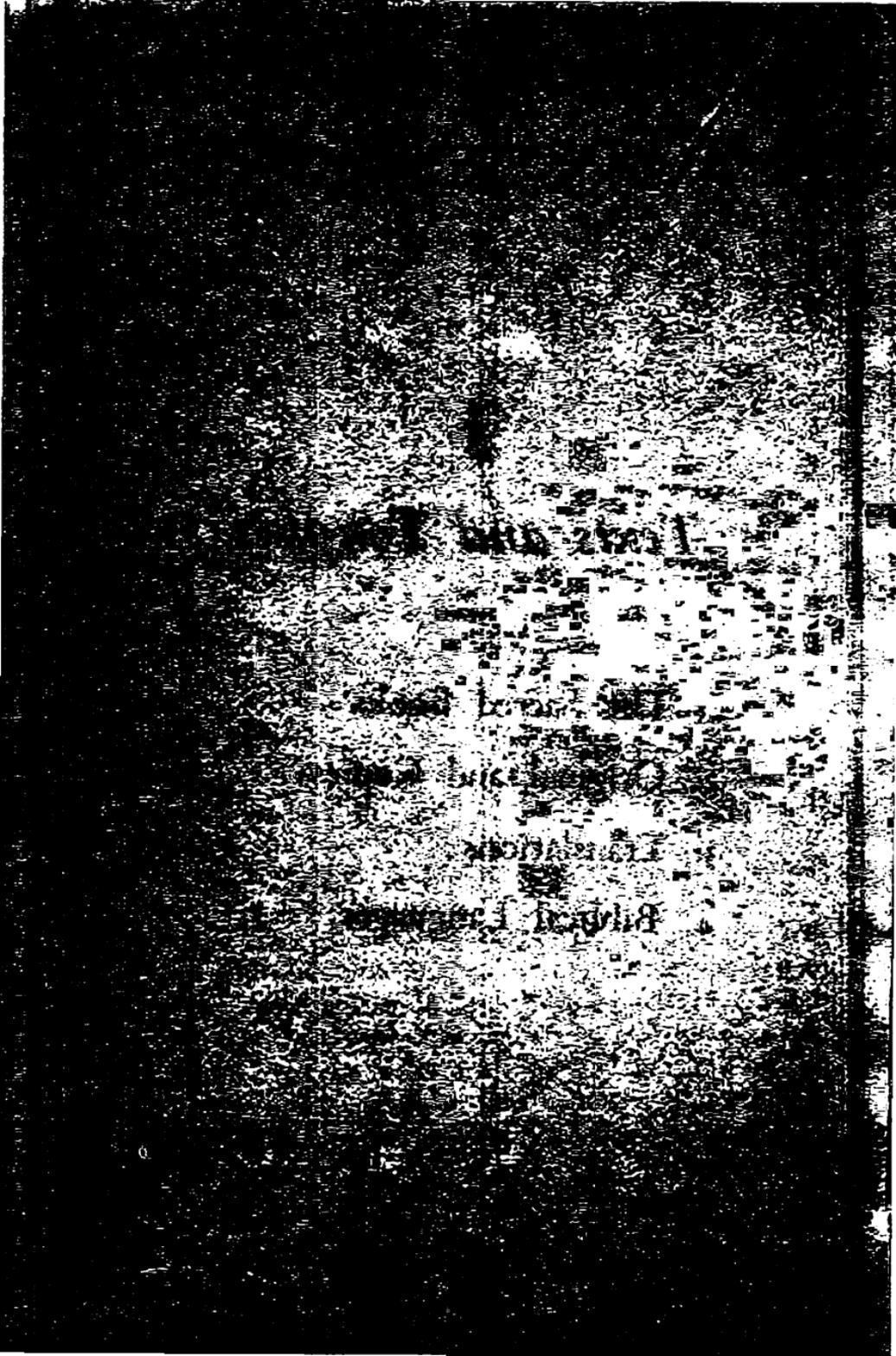
Scrutamini Scripturas! In searching the Scriptures may we search and find the source of life on which all sacred writings converge, the Christ of the Scriptures.



I

Texts and Tongues

1. The Sacred Books
2. Original and Copies
3. Translations
4. Biblical Languages



The Sacred Books

I. PUBLIC READING OF THE SACRED SCRIPTURES

1. A Model for Lectors

Since 1958 it has been almost a test of enlightened pastoral concern in our parishes to train responsible lay readers for Mass. The ruling of the conciliar Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy and the Instruction for its implementation changed the Latin lessons, which the priest used to read *sotto voce* for his own edification and consolation, into a vernacular proclamation by an official lector, clerical or lay, for the common enlightenment and spiritual profit of the entire congregation. Naturally if this change is to be any improvement, the reading of the Word of God must be done with sufficient preparation and with the greatest deliberation and clarity in a dignified and unhurried manner.

There is in Scripture a passage which seems to offer us the prototype of the qualities a competent public reader of the sacred text should possess. In chapter eight of the book of Nehemiah (which Catholics used till recently to call the second book of Esdras), we are told how the learned scribe Ezra (or Esdras), after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, re-organized the scattered community on the basis of the Torah or Law, which he read out to them.

“The whole people gathered, like one man, in the open space before the Water-gate; and there they would have the scribe Ezra go and fetch the book in which the law of Moses, the Lord’s prescription to Israel, was written down. So there and then, Ezra fetched the book, in the presence of a great throng of men and women, with such children as were old enough to understand it. And there in the open space before the Water-gate he proclaimed the law, before men and women and such younger folk as could take it in, from daybreak to noon, and all listened attentively while the reading went on. A wooden pulpit had been erected to carry the sound better and at this the scribe Ezra stood....He was plainly seen, as he opened the book, by all the people underneath. When he had opened it, all rose; and when he blessed the name of the Lord, great God, all lifted their hands and answered, Amen, amen; and with that they bowed down and worshipped with their faces close to the ground. Then the Levites came forward, who enjoined silence on the people, as they stood

there in their places for the reading of the Law. And they read out the book of the law, clear and plain to give the sense of it, so that all could understand the reading."

Here we have a preview of today's lector, who should be able to address a large congregation distinctly, intelligibly, meaningfully, commanding the rapt attention of all the faithful for long spells, even when having at his disposal in the way of a public address system nothing but a wooden platform or ambo to stand on, and his unaided strong, vibrant, well-modulated vocal chords.

Timothy, who had been left by Paul to preside over the young church in the Roman province of Asia, is expected to "attend to the public reading of scripture, to preaching, to teaching" (1 Tim 4:13). The Revised Standard Version and the New English Bible paraphrase the first task of "reading" (*anagnosis*) as "the public reading of scripture." This is a work for every instructed Catholic, from the local bishop to the ordinary well-trained layman.

2. *Qualifications*

The first requisite for a good lector (from the time of Ezra, who had to speak in the public square from daybreak to noon with no microphone), would seem to be that he must be heard by all. Facing the congregation four-square on an elevated platform is no doubt a help to audibility.

But, as trained actors have proved a thousand times over in whispered lines, the audibility of a voice depends primarily not on bigness of volume but on sharpness of diction.

Next to clear enunciation comes interpretation or intelligent reading. This requires that the reader understand what he reads. The Horatian dictum still holds good: "If you would have me weep, you must first of all feel grief yourself" (*Ars poet.* 102). A good reader can make a complex passage instantly clear and even throw new lights for those who are dulled by overfamiliarity. He must first be absolutely clear as to the meaning of the text, and then must consider what pauses, emphases and variations of pace will best communicate the meaning.

There is a subtle connection between understanding and reading, which appears in the verbs for these two actions both in Greek (*gignosko* and *anagignosko*) and in Latin (*intellego* and *lego*), which, however, cannot be captured in an English version. The former Greek word means to know; the latter means to know again, to recognize a man's thought in written characters, to read. This play on the words is apparent in the passage of the Acts of the Apostles (8:30), where Philip the deacon, on hearing the Ethiopian eunuch or chamberlain read aloud the prophet Isaiah while riding on his chariot, asked him whether he understood what he was reading — *intellegis quae legis?*

In a note to this verse C.H. Rieu tried to

reproduce the Greek and Latin pun thus: "Are you really taking in what you are reading out?" Other attempts might run along these lines: "The passage is legible enough, but do you find it intelligible", or "One thing is reading, another reading between the lines". The Ethiopian Finance Minister's frank answer has provided the title for one of the books by the English Biblical scholar, Fr Alexander Jones, an introduction to Scripture reading and study: "And how can I, unless some man show me?"

In the Anglican Communion and in some other Protestant Churches there exists the office of "lay reader," a layman who leads the people in services where the regular minister needs help or is not available.

The Second Vatican Council has provided for a similar role to be performed by lectors and commentators. A lector reads the Scriptures at liturgical ceremonies; a commentator explains their meaning to the faithful. The Constitution on the Liturgy extends the concept of "liturgical function" to lectors and commentators. It does not restrict their participation outside the sanctuary nor state that reading and commentary must be carried out by a priest or cleric whenever possible.

The public reading of the Word of God in the new Liturgy has become more than a recitation of a text; it is the proclamation of a message. In the manner of delivery and the tone of voice there is a great difference between a simple reading and a solemn proclamation. The good reader can do

justice to a Scripture passage only by a proper declamation and pronunciation and by personal conviction. Now more than ever before, the future ministers of the Word have to be trained in deliberate, forceful, meaningful Public Speaking.

A prominent churchman of the period once asked the famous actor, David Garrick: "Why is it that I, who speak great truths, can only fill my church once a week, while you, who speak merely fiction, can fill a theatre every night?" Garrick replied: "Because you speak truth as if it were fiction, while I speak fiction as if it were truth."

Archbishop Roberts once told his Bombay Seminary students—with an obvious hyperbole to stress a point—that he would be content if, as a result of their seminary training, they could later as priests read out his pastoral letters intelligibly and intelligently.

II. WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

3. *The word 'Bible'*

The word 'Bible' is derived from the late Latin *Biblia*, corresponding to the Greek *ta biblia*, 'the books', used specifically of the canonical books of Sacred Scripture.

The word goes back beyond its Greek origin to the second millennium before Christ, when an Egyptian envoy, Wen-Ammon by name, visited the king of the Phoenician town of Byblos to purchase cedar wood. Its inhabitants, as we read in the Bible itself, were skilled in stone-cutting, wood-working and ship-building (1 Kings 5:6, 18; Ezek 27:9). Byblos accepted freely the superior culture of Egypt, with which it had long been in contact. Among the articles imported from Egypt there was the papyrus plant, which became naturalized in Phoenicia. The merchants of Byblos made their port the greatest papyrus market of the time and imposed the name of their town on the product they sold.

The root of the byblos plant furnished a coarse article of food, which the Greeks, as can be seen in Aeschilus' *The Suppliants*, ridiculed the Egyptians for eating. Its leaves and rind were manufactured into sandals, girdles, ropes and sailcloth, whilst its pith was wrought into the celebrated papyrus which until it was superseded by parchment or

wood pulp, formed the writing material of the civilized world. From Byblos the Greeks called papyrus *biblos* and *biblion*. In Latin it became *biblia*, and in Old English we find the word spelled *bibul* and *bibil*.

The port of Byblos, known today by the Arabic name of Jebeil or Gebal, lies 20 miles north of Beirut in Lebanon and 42 miles north of Sidon. Philo reports that Byblos was considered the oldest city and port in the world. From the splendid castle the Crusaders built here, one looks down on the ruins left by all earlier conquerors. In this capital the Phoenicians, over 3,000 years ago, invented the first alphabet. According to one tradition, John Mark, the author of the second Gospel, was its first bishop. Today Byblos is entered as a titular see in the Pontifical Directory.

4. *The Book of Books*

The Jews of Hellenistic origin first used the word *Biblia* to denote their sacred writings. The Church used it to include all those early Christian writings which she recognized as inspired.

The fact that no qualifying adjective stands before the Greek plural *Ta Biblia*, The Books, implies that these writings were regarded by those who used the term as forming a class by themselves and as superior to all other literary productions. They are uniquely and pre-eminently *the books*.

The plural term *Biblia* marks the important fact that the Bible is not a single book, but a great many. The words Bible and Scripture, on the other hand, being both in the singular number, emphasize the fact that, under the diversity of human authorship, there lies a wonderful unity, pointing to the operation of one directing Mind, which acted during more than a thousand consecutive years when these writings were being produced.

5. *Two Testaments*

The sacred books of the Christian dispensation fall naturally into two groups of unequal length, the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The word 'Testament' appears at first glance unusual; yet, if rightly understood, it confronts the reader immediately with the mystery at the very heart of Scripture, the mystery of the covenant between God and man. Testament denotes *alliance*, the Hebrew word *berith* applying to the covenant which existed, from the time of Abraham, between the Almighty and the People which he had chosen to be his witness and mouthpiece. *Berith* was rendered in the Greek of the Septuagint version by the word *diatheke*, which lays emphasis on the idea of treaty or document ratifying the alliance. In Latin, *diatheke* was translated, somewhat unfortunately, by *testamentum*, a term which denoted not so much a treaty of alliance as a written instrument of an official character containing a last will.

Christianity recognizes two manifestations of this divine plan: the restricted covenant with the people of Israel under Moses, and the new unrestricted covenant with all mankind under Christ. Our division of the Bible corresponds to these two stages. The Old Testament includes all those books written before the coming of Christ, which were recognized by the Jews as divinely inspired. The New Testament comprises the writings of some of the chief disciples of Christ which the Church similarly guarantees to be inspired.

6. *The Best Best-seller*

Ever since Johann Gutenberg invented the process of printing from movable type, the Bible has been by far the most widely read book ever printed. Today the Bible, in its entirety or in part, can be read in almost every language of any importance from Afrikaans to Zulu. God's Word can be read today in Japanese and Javanese, in Hindi and Sindhi, in Singhalese and Senegalese.

At present there are translations of the Bible or part of it in 1660 different languages in the whole world. The complete Bible exists in 268 languages and the New Testament has been translated into 435 languages. The rest are partial versions to different dialects. According to *Index Translationum* of UNESCO for the year 1978, the annual list of translations published by the United Nations Educational and Cultural Organization, 286

translations of the Bible were published that year. Number two on the list of most translated works came the writings of Lenin with 201 translations in the same year, and Shakespeare in the third place with 159.

Through the joint efforts of the Bible societies throughout the world, the annual circulation of the Scriptures is about 50 million copies in about 600 languages. Some 4.25 million volumes are complete Bibles. The entire Bible has been published in over 225 of the world's languages; the New Testament may be read in about 285 additional languages; and individual books of the Bible have been translated into over 680 tongues. Thus at least part of the Bible is available to nine-tenths of the world's literate population.

The warm encouragement given by the Second Vatican Council to the translation, publication, reading and study of the Sacred Scriptures will no doubt make the Word of God still better known among Catholics.

At a meeting held in January 1967 between members of the Vatican's Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and a special committee of the United Bible Societies, the Protestant organization that publishes Bibles all over the world, an agreement was reached on methods for producing a common Bible. Presiding over the meeting were Cardinal Bea, president of the Unity Secretariat, and Dr Laton Holmgren, Chairman of the United Bible Societies' executive committee

and general secretary of the American Bible Society. "It does not seem an exaggeration", stated Cardinal Bea, "to say that the possibility of our co-operation is one of the most important developments in contemporary Christian history." Dr Holmgren was equally enthusiastic when he said: "What we do here may indeed hasten the day when we can triumphantly proclaim to a sceptical world that there is indeed one faith, one gospel, one Lord of all."

A remarkable recent case has been that of the ecumenical translation of the New Testament in "basic" Arabic, which may be understood by all who speak different Arabic dialects. The team of translators comprised three Egyptians, a copt orthodox, a Catholic copt bishop, a protestant and a Lebanese poet.

The Bible sells well in Japan, where the total number of Christians does not exceed one per cent of the population. According to Japan's *Asahi Shinbun*, ten million copies of the Bible were sold there in 1977. This means that one of every 10 Japanese purchased a copy of the Bible that year. There is no other country where the number of Bibles sold exceeds the number of faithful.

III. GOSPEL AND GOSPELS

7. The word "Euaggelion"

The Greek noun *Euaggelion*, transcribed by our word *evangel*, means exactly the same as the Anglo-Saxon noun *gospel* or *god spell*, the same again as the Hindi *su-samachar* and the Marathi *suvarta*—good news.

Greek writers of the classical period, as Homer, Xenophon and Aeschines, used the word *euaggelion* to signify glad tidings, or a wreath given as a reward to the bearer of favourable information, or also a sacrificial offering made to the deity responsible for the happy event announced.

In the Septuagint version of the Old Testament the term is used four times for the message, and twice for the reward.

Cicero, writing to his intimate friend Atticus, who had lived at Athens for many years, informs him of a pleasant surprise he had had a few days earlier. "Fancy two such delightful letters of yours being delivered to me at one and the same time!" he tells his friend. "I don't know what return to make you for such excellent news." ("*Quibus litteris euaggelia quae reddam, nescio.*"—*Ad Att. ii, 12*).

The word then became specialized to mean news of victory. It got a religious connotation in connection with oracles, where it denoted the utterance of the oracle, especially in relation to

Emperor worship. Because the Emperor was regarded as a divine being, the saviour of the world and the deliverer of the individual from distress, his birth, his accession to the throne, and his pronouncements were held to be glad tidings. The calendar inscription of Priene in Asia Minor (9 B.C.) says of the birthday of Augustus: "The birthday of the god was for the world the beginning of joyful tidings (*euaggelion*)."

8. *Oral and Written*

In the New Testament this word means the good news of salvation, as foretold by the ancient prophets, announced by God's messenger (*aggelos*) to the shepherds on Christmas night, proclaimed by Christ himself during his earthly life, and transmitted to the world by the Apostles. In these books the term always refers to the living word of speaking, not of writing; and so the itinerant preachers of the Christian message, as Philip the deacon, are called evangelists (Acts 21:8). Saint Paul counsels Timothy to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim 4:5).

In the second century the word *euaggelion* was already used to refer to a written account of the life and work of Jesus. Justin the Martyr speaks of "the recollections of the Apostles, which are called *euaggelia*". Likewise the designation 'evangelist' is henceforward applied to the authors of the Gospel books.

9. *One Gospel in Four Editions*

Our Lord commanded his disciples to preach the Gospel to all nations. All preached orally, and some also wrote. The titles of more than fifty gospels have been transmitted, but only four of them were from the earliest days accepted as authentic and inspired. The rest were composed by devout believers or by heretics and were soon recognized as apocryphal.

Since it proclaims the message of universal salvation which Christ has brought to the world, the Gospel is naturally one. Even when the four canonical accounts were accepted everywhere, it was customary to call them "the Gospel" or "the four books of the one Gospel", or the "fourform or tetramorphic Gospel." To show which of the four books was intended, the name of the author with the preposition *kata* (according to) was added to the title of the book. The conviction that the four books of Gospels contain one and the same Gospel of Jesus Christ retained its living force during the early Christian period.

This idea inspired the attempt which was made in the second century to fit the four canonical Gospels together into one uniform closed account of the life and work of Jesus, thereby producing what is called a Gospel Harmony.

10. *The Four Living Creatures*

The four Evangelists were believed to have

been symbolized by the four living creatures of Ezekiel (1:10) and the book of Revelation (4:7). Saint Ambrose's interpretation of these texts is often accepted: Matthew is symbolized by the *man*, because he begins his Gospel with the human genealogy of Christ; Mark is represented by the *lion*, because the first verses of his Gospel tell the story of the message of the Baptist proclaimed in the wilderness; as Luke's Gospel begins with Zechariah's sacrifice in the temple, he is typified by the *bull*; while the soaring *eagle* signifies John's sublime presentation of the divine nature of Jesus.

There is no trace of the four beasts in the art of the catacombs. They made their appearance in Christian iconography in the fifth century. They soon became a favourite subject for designers of mosaics. They are shown in the starry vault of the tomb of Galla Placidia at Ravenna, in San Vitale in the same city, in the baptistry of San Sotero in Naples. In Rome they can be seen at St Paul's without the Walls, at St Mary Major, at Santa Pudenziana and at Santa Sabina.

The four living creatures were equally popular with the illuminators of manuscripts, and we find examples in the Lindisfarne Gospels in the British Museum, in the Book of Kells at Trinity College in Dublin, in the Gospels of Lothair and St Louis in the Paris National Library. There are others in Amiens, Trier and Munich.

The visitor to cathedrals and churches in Europe will meet the familiar group often enough. In

Venice the emphasis is on the lion of St Mark, the patron saint of the City of the Lagoons. Standing proudly outside the cathedral of the papal city of Orvieto in central Italy, large sculptures of the four winged beasts are beautifully cast in bronze. In not a few of the large crucifixes hanging in churches of many countries the four apocalyptic figures have taken their stations on the four arms of the Cross.

In many English and continental churches, *one* of the four figures is to be seen in a most prominent place. The eagle of St John (he himself is known as the eagle of Patmos) has become the lectern. The symbolism is obvious enough. For "in the beginning was the Word" is the opening phrase of the fourth Gospel; and it is the Word of God which John's eagle supports with its outstretched wings.

Christian antiquity, when placing the four living creatures around the figure of Christ, desired to emphasize our Lord's redemptive work from the incarnation (*man*) through the sacrificial death (*bull*) and triumphant resurrection (*lion*) to his glorious ascension to heaven (*eagle*).

IV. CANONICAL AND APOCRYPHAL BOOKS

11. *What is the Canon?*

Semantics can be a fascinating science. Even the dry pages of a dictionary can have their thrills. Would you have ever thought, for instance, that the canon of the Mass, the canyon of Colorado and the bright-hued cannas in your garden were all derived from one and the same word, the Greek *Kanna* and the Hebrew *qaneh*? The word meant a reed or cane, a measuring rod, a rule or model, and then a standard of excellence in art or literature.

The word was employed by the Alexandrian grammarians for the corpus of classical works worthy of serving as models. Cicero, writing to his learned friend and secretary Tiro, pays him the compliment of taking him as the rule or test of his writings—“*tu, qui kanon esse meorum scriptorum soles*” (*Fam. xvi, 17*). Pliny the Elder (*Hist. Natur. xxxiv, 55*) refers to the sculptor Polyclitus as having laid down the canons or rules of universal application with regard to the proportions of the human body in its mean standard of height, age or sex. In fact, one of Polyclitus' statues, the *Doryphoros*, a powerful youth hurling a spear, was fashioned so closely in accord with his specifications, that it came to be known as the *Kanon*, and for a long time served as a standard for succeeding artists.

The word *canon* occurs only four times in the New Testament, in St Paul's letters: three times with the meaning of something measured or circumscribed (2 Cor 10:13, 15, 16), and once with the meaning of rule of conduct (Gal 6:16).

The early ecclesiastical writers used the word to designate the norm of tradition, the rule of faith or truth, the pattern of Christian life or ecclesiastical discipline. From the fourth century some regulations or decrees promulgated by ecclesiastical authority were, and still are, called *canons*. The fixed part of the Mass, in contrast with the changeable parts that follow seasons and feasts, was called the *canon*.

12. Books in the Canon

It was in the days of St Jerome and St Augustine that the collection of books which the Church acknowledged to be of divine origin and authority, and which had been committed to her care as the rule and norm of faith and life began to be called the *canon* of Scripture. It is in this sense that down the centuries many of the official documents of the Church have used the term, among the most important being those of the Council of Trent in 1546 and those of the First Vatican Council in 1870.

The Second Vatican Council, in its dogmatic constitution on Divine Revelation (8) has stated that the full canon of the sacred books is known from tradition, and that the books of both the

Testaments are canonical because, having been written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author and have been handed on as such to the Church (11).

The Old Testament is the collection of the holy books of Jewish origin. The Catholic Church gives their number as 45, modern Jews and the Protestant Churches as 38. The discrepancy goes back to the times of Christ, when the Palestinian Jews accepted only the 38 books which had been handed down in Hebrew, whilst the Greek-speaking Jews of the Dispersion, especially those at Alexandria, added a further seven which had been preserved only in Greek (Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, and the two books of Maccabees).

Catholics usually call these seven books deutero-canonical (or contained in a second list) to distinguish them from the proto-canonical books (or received in the approved list earlier). The Council of Trent defined that both sets are equally inspired. Protestants call our deutero-canonical books apocryphal books, a term which among Catholic authors conveys a meaning that will be specified here presently.

In the New Testament, Catholics and Protestants are agreed in recognizing the same 27 inspired books. These are often divided into three categories: the historical books (the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles), the didactic books (the fourteen epistles of St Paul and seven other

epistles with the signature of St Peter, St James and St Jude), and finally one prophetic book, the Apocalypse or Revelation.

13 . *Apocrypha: O.T. and N.T.*

Catholic biblical terminology applies the term *apocryphal* (in Greek, 'hidden' or 'secret') to any work which, although it presents itself more or less avowedly as inspired Scripture, is not in the official canon of the Sacred Books. (These writings for which divine authorship is falsely claimed are called by Protestants *pseudepigrapha*, a term used in this sense by ecclesiastical writers of the first centuries.)

According as the apocrypha resemble the Old Testament or the New Testament books, they fall into two groups. The Old Testament apocrypha were composed between the second century B.C. and the first century A.D., and can be classed into so-called historical, didactic, and prophetic books. Among the first the following narratives may be mentioned: the Book of Jubilees, the Life of Adam and Eve, the Ascension of Isaiah, the Testament of Job, the Letter of Aristeas. Didactic in nature are the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, the Psalms of Solomon, the Damascus Document discovered at Cairo in 1897, and several of the texts found recently among the Dead Sea Scrolls (as the Commentary on Habakkuk, the Manual of Discipline, the Rule of War, Hymns of Thanksgiving). Apocalypse prophecy abounds in

the Book of Henoch, the Assumption of Moses, and the Apocalypses of Abraham, Elijah, Baruch and Ezekiel, and in the Jewish Sibylline Books.

The New Testament apocrypha were composed from the end of the first to the fifth century of the Christian era, and can be divided into apocryphal Gospels, Acts, Epistles and Apocalypses—all together quite an abundant crop. To mention but a few of the many spurious Gospels, we have the Gospels according to the Hebrews and according to the Egyptians; that of the Twelve Apostles and the Proto-evangel of James; the Gospels of Peter, John, Thomas, and of Paul and Thecla. Among the letters there is a Third Letter to the Corinthians, Paul's Letter to the Laodiceans, fourteen short letters between Paul and Seneca, and the Correspondence between Christ and Abgar the king of Edessa. The best-preserved of the Apocalypses are those of Peter, Paul and Thomas.

The apocryphal books of the Old Testament are products of Judaism, and reflect the religious and moral ideas of the Jewish world around the beginning of the Christian era. The New Testament apocrypha owe their inspiration to Christianity and reflect the beliefs, doctrines and traditions which were current in certain circles, orthodox as well as heretical, in the first centuries of the Church.

The anonymous authors made use of the means suited to strike the imagination of the reader, to satisfy his curiosity and to win his assent. To give

greater plausibility to their fanciful inventions, this very special class of "sacred writers" resorted most frequently to pious literary fiction, and, in doing so, they hid themselves behind the names of great biblical personages.

As historical sources these books have little or no value. They are extremely valuable for reconstructing particular historical situations, special religious and moral conditions, the lively expectations of the Messiah, some popular beliefs of Judaism in New Testament times, as well as for tracing certain obscure heretical tendencies in the early Church. The New Testament apocrypha are also conducive to a better understanding of Christian art because of their influence on the symbolism and imagery in many later art forms, such as stained glass, illuminated manuscripts, painting, and poetry, notably that of Dante.



2

Original and Copies

I. MANUSCRIPTS OF THE BIBLE

1. Reconstructing the Originals

The inspired authors committed their thought to writing. The circumstances in which books were published before the invention of the printing press explain the variant readings and the many small errors with which a text bristled after it had been copied from a copy of a copy. Even so the biblical text is incomparably better established, for instance, than that of any of the Greek or Roman classics.

Since we do not possess any autograph text of the Bible, we must reconstruct the original from copies which have come down to us. In doing this scholars employ two sorts of evidence: the direct evidence provided by copies of the original, and the indirect evidence provided by early trans-

lations of the original and by quotations of it in ancient writers.

The actual manuscripts (MSS) of the Bible are numbered in thousands, but not all are of the same value. It has been the biblical textual critic's task to make a judicious choice of manuscripts. Saint Jerome's life's work was to produce a Latin version of the Scriptures according to the most reliable Greek and Hebrew manuscripts, of which he was an avid collector. There is the story—not apocryphal!—of the young Jesuit student, who in the course of his public reading at table announced, to the amusement of half of the community and to the scandal of the other half, that Saint Jerome, when leaving his solitary hermitage at Bethlehem, carried his *Mrs* wrapped up in a bundle on his shoulders.

2. *From Original to Copy*

It is not generally realised that in the case of the great ancient classical writers the interval between composition and the first known manuscript is almost always enormous: twelve centuries in the case of the speeches of Demosthenes, thirteen for Plato's dialogues, fourteen for the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles, sixteen for the works of Euripides and Catullus. How great is that interval in the case of the Bible?

So far as the Hebrew part is concerned the reply till recently was not very encouraging. The oldest manuscript seemed to be that preserved at a synagogue in the Crimea, which has been dated at A.D. 830.

The situation changed with the recent phenomenal discoveries at Qumran, near the Dead Sea. It is well known that in 1947 rolls containing many biblical texts were found in jars in several caves. It is commonly agreed that they were hidden there during the terrible events of the Jewish war of A.D. 66-70, which climaxed in the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. It goes without saying that the manuscripts must be earlier than this date, and some of them seem to be a great deal earlier, dating perhaps to the third or fourth century B.C. For the parts of the Bible, therefore, which occur in the Dead Sea Scrolls—notably two complete copies of Isaiah and parts of Genesis, Exodus and Deuteronomy—we now have copies extremely close to the originals.

3 . *From Scroll to Codex*

At first biblical texts were written on lengths of papyrus or parchments which were rolled into scrolls. The leaves were stuck together end to end to form a roll some thirty or forty feet long. Skins of sheep or goats, smoothed with pumice in such a manner as to furnish two writing surfaces, came to be known as parchments or *chartae pergamenae*, from the town of Pergamum, whose king Eumenes II adopted this writing material for the books of his great library, when Ptolemy V banned the export of papyrus from Egypt.

Then came the era of the *codex*, which was easier to handle for ready consultation than the scroll. The codex consisted of a number of papyrus

or parchment sheets stitched together very much like our modern books. Parchment volumes were introduced by the early Christians who apparently were instrumental in popularizing this method, which was used throughout the Middle Ages until paper was introduced in the fifteenth century.

Although papyrus must have been commonly used in Palestine, its use as a writing material is not mentioned in the Bible. It was the material of the basket or vessel in which Moses was exposed in the Nile (Ex 2:3), and boats of papyrus are mentioned in Isaiah (18:2). The same book (35:7) and that of Job (8:11) allude to papyrus as growing in water.

Parchment is mentioned in the Bible only once together with *biblia*, probably papyrus scrolls, when Paul writes to his disciple Timothy: "When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments" (2 Tim 4:13).

Among the codices containing biblical texts some are particularly valuable, among them the *Codex Alexandrinus*, the *Codex Vaticanus*, the *Codex Bezae* and the *Codex Sinaiticus*. The story of the last mentioned codex is of special interest.

II. THE DISCOVERY OF A CODEX

4. Discoverer Tischendorf

The *Codex Sinaiticus*, now in the British Museum, offers one of the most romantic stories of biblical discoveries, comparable to the interest aroused by the finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls thirty years ago.

In May 1844, the German scholar Konstantin von Tischendorf, after four years of research in the libraries and museums of Germany, Holland, England, France, Spain, Italy and the Near East, arrived at the lonely monastery of St Catherine, high up on Mount Sinai, in search of ancient manuscripts. Here a large waste-paper basket caught his eye. The monastery librarian told the visitor that it contained old rubbish that would shortly be burned: two basketfuls had already been disposed of in this way. Tischendorf asked to see the contents and was amazed to find 129 leaves from what seemed to be the oldest Bible he had ever set his eyes upon. They contained parts of the Old Testament in the Greek translation of the Septuagint. Could he have this rubbish? The monks could tell the foreigner was excited by his find. They let him have one third only.

Later Tischendorf made a present of these forty-three precious leaves to Frederick Augustus II of Saxony, who had subsidized his scientific travels. They are still in the library of the

University of Leipzig and are known to scholars as the *Codex Friderico-Augustanus*.

5. *Second and Third Journeys of Discovery*

Christopher Columbus did not rest idle after his first voyage of discovery; nor did the German discoverer after his first visit to Mount Sinai. He knew that here treasures lay. On a second visit to St Catherine's Monastery, in 1853, Tischendorf found the monks unhelpful. All he got hold of was a fragment containing a few verses of Genesis. Six years later, he was once again knocking at the monastery door on Sinai, a visitor under the patronage of the Russian Czar Alexander II. This time he was cautious. He talked about anything and everything except biblical manuscripts. This visit seemed to be doomed to utter failure until, on the eve of his departure, in a chance conversation on books with the monk who was serving him at table, this, as a display of his learning, said: "I too have a Septuagint". When he brought and untied a bulky parcel, there appeared before Tischendorf's astonished gaze not merely the leaves which he had rescued from the flames of the monastery kitchen fifteen years before, but also other numerous parts of the Old Testament, the entire New Testament, besides two early Christian classics, the Epistle of Barnabas and the "Shepherd" of Hermas, of which two works no copies of the original Greek were known to exist.

Tischendorf relates his reactions to this discovery in his two works *Reise in den Orient* (Travel

in the East) and *Aus dem heiligen Land* (From the Holy Land). Trying to sound as casual as possible, he asked permission to borrow the volumes for the night. He could have them. Deeming it "a crime to sleep in such a night", the scholar burned the midnight oil copying all he could.

"When I was alone in my cell, I gave free rein to my joy. I knew I had between my fingers the greatest treasure which could be found for the study of the Bible; a document which, on account of its antiquity, ranked supreme among the extant manuscripts which I had handled for the past twenty years. I cannot describe the transport I felt in those hours when for the first time I had before me that veritable biblical diamond. Despite an abominable light and a piercing cold, I spent the whole night transcribing the text."

It was later found that this coincided with the Greek text of which Saint Ireneus had made use, and therefore with that which was in usage in the earliest decades of Christianity.

The following morning, the commandment "Thou shall not steal" still ringing in his ears from the heights of Sinai, Tischendorf had to part company with the monks of St Catherine's....and with the *Codex Sinaiticus*.

6. *From St Catherine's to St Petersburg*

But from Cairo, and through the good offices of

the monks of another Greek Orthodox monastery, he succeeded in having the coveted manuscript sent to him there for transcription. It later occurred to him to persuade the monks to present the manuscript to the Czar of Russia, who was now the patron of his travels, as well as the traditional protector of the Eastern Orthodox Churches. The project seemed to the monks worth considering. The archbishopric of Sinai had fallen vacant: it would be useful to gain the Czar's support for their nominee. The negotiations were long and involved. It was only in 1867 that the codex was presented to the Czar and placed in the Imperial Library of St Petersburg. In return the monks of St Catherine's received 9,000 roubles. Their candidate had also secured the coveted archbishopric.

The manuscript is on good parchment; the 347 leaves surviving measure about 15 inches by 13; there are generally four columns to a page and 48 lines to a column. It is written in large characters, well formed, without accents or breathings, and with no punctuation. Experts have placed it in the fourth century.

7. The Codex goes to London

In 1933 the *Codex Sinaiticus* found a new home. It was bought from the Soviet Government for £100,000. The British Government agreed to pay £1 for every £1 raised by the British Museum. So successful was the appeal that the Museum was able to pay more than its agreed quota.

Henry V. Morton in his *Through Lands of the Bible*, when describing his visit to Mount Sinai, warns every Englishman contemplating a visit to St Catherine's Monastery against dropping the least hint to the monks that he or his ancestors had subscribed to the purchase of the *Codex Sinaiticus*. The monks seem to have strong feelings about it. The present generation of monks think that the Czar obtained possession of the manuscript by unfair means, and that it was wrong of the British to have bought at great cost what they regard as stolen property.

The result of the transaction is that the monks now guard their library very jealously. The books are no longer neglected, waste-paper baskets need not be emptied so frequently, and precious manuscripts are stored in a stone room rather like a bank vault.

III. LIGHT FROM THE CAVES

8. *The Story of a Lost Sheep*

In the summer of 1947, the interest of scholars and even of the general public was aroused by the accidental finding of a number of ancient biblical manuscripts in the desert of Judah, one mile from the Dead Sea. The interest showed itself in the quick reaction of press, radio and television, as it appeared that this was only the beginning of the greatest manuscript discovery of modern times, or of all times.

A Bedouin shepherd lad, Muhammad adh-Dhib, had missed a sheep in the flock, and leaving, in Gospel fashion, the other ninety-nine, went in search of the stray sheep. He was amusing himself by throwing stones at one of the many holes that pock-mark the face of a cliff overlooking the Dead Sea, when a lucky shot passing through the aperture was followed by the sound of a breakage. Afraid, he went away.

The next day Muhammad returned with his cousin, and as there were two of them now, they were brave enough to enter the cave. Climbing through the hole and dropping to the floor of the cave, they first groped in darkness; but as their eyes grew accustomed, they made out some eleven jars with lids against the walls. They opened one; it was empty. They opened another one; it too was empty. They opened a third jar, and from

this one they took some leather scrolls inscribed with some strange writing and carefully wrapped in linen. It was the beginning of a great adventure. These scrolls were bought by dealers of antiquities who, after negotiations as complex as the plot of any detective story, sold them to various customers.

It was then discovered that the scrolls were of the highest scientific value. Just then the conflict between Arabs and Jews broke out. Search of other caves was taken up one year later. Archaeologists, chief among them Mr G. L. Harding and the Dominican Father Roland de Vaux, aided by local tribesmen, undertook a systematic combing of the whole desert area, and in a few years brought to light many other scrolls in ten other caves, and a variety of other ancient implements and ruins.

9. A Community of Jewish Monks

It was soon suggested that the scrolls might well be a library that had belonged to the Essenes, an interesting religious community of Jewish monks, about whom much more is now known through these very scrolls.

The manuscripts discovered at Qumran are mainly of two kinds: Biblical texts and commentaries, and books on the Essenian brotherhood. Remains of practically every book of the Hebrew Old Testament have been found in the library of Qumran, especially in cave 4. One of the greatest finds is a complete manuscript of Isaiah. Students can now consult a copy of a book of the Old

Testament older by about a thousand years than any which they possessed before. This is a tremendous help in deciding on the correct text of the Bible. Among the books concerning the Essenes, one is of particular interest, the *Manual of Discipline*, dealing with the regulations for the community. While there are considerable differences in the interpretation of the texts, there is general agreement on the authenticity of the finds and the age of the texts, which varies roughly between 100 B.C. and A.D. 70.

At the foot of the cliffs in which the scrolls were discovered there is a large natural esplanade upon which lay the almost entirely buried ruins of some unidentified buildings, called by the Arabs Khirbet Qumran, *khirbet* meaning 'ruin'.

The site lies off the shore of the Dead Sea some ten miles east of Jerusalem. This agrees with what Pliny the Elder records of the home of the Essenes in his *Natural History* (v, 17). He remarks that they chose a spot sufficiently far from the shore to be immune from the noxious exhalation of the Dead Sea, which he calls by the then common name of Lake of Asphalt, and which in Old Testament times was known as "the Sea of Salt". He calls the Essenes a group unique in the world, an imperishable race among whom there are no births—*gens aeterna in qua nemo nascitur*. (That was a far cry from the days of population explosion!).

Excavations conducted in this area under the direction of Père de Vaux, from 1951 to 1956, revealed in what appeared a commonplace Roman fortification a group of large buildings beneath a

fortress, comprising what has been identified as a large assembly hall, a scriptorium, a kitchen and store-rooms, a laundry and large water cisterns, workshops and a pottery and stables. Archaeologists were confirmed in their opinion that the establishment was a monastery, when they discovered a cemetery with a thousand graves.

This community, according to all indications, was one of Essenes, the only important religious group among the Jews to which there is no reference in the Gospels. The principal virtues recommended in the books discovered—contempt for riches, isolation from the world, love of neighbour, continence, humility—were those which were practised by the Essenes, who were men intensely religious, keen searchers of the Scriptures, looking forward to the time when God's purpose would be fulfilled in the world.

It was only natural for students of comparative religion to look for possible connections between Essenism and Christianity, and there is no doubt that there are resemblances. The studies of some authors show that St Paul's letter to the Ephesians has numerous contacts with the Qumran literature. In an article published in the April 1965 issue of *The Bible Today*, Fr Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, O.P., of the *Ecole Biblique*, Jerusalem, has advanced an argument in favour of the suggestion that the amanuensis for the epistle to the Ephesians, whose authenticity has been doubted by some scholars, was a Christian convert from Essenism. Some have even toyed with the idea that John the Baptist spent his youth as a disciple of the Qumran community until he received a personal call from

God to start his mission of Forerunner of Christ. When the *Illustrated London News* for 3 September 1955 published a set of photographs of Qumran, it went so far as to suggest that Jesus himself may have been at Qumran, as a youth. Some authors, going far beyond the evidence, would make Christianity a sort of second improved edition of Essenism.

10. Hidden Treasure

How did this library in jars come to be hidden in the caves of the desert of Judah? The most plausible explanation is the one connecting the scrolls with the Jewish revolt in A.D. 66 and the destruction of the Qumran settlement by the Roman troops two years later.

According to all appearances, the members of the Essenian community did their best to bring their most important treasures to a place of safety as the enemy approached. Their first concern was how best to safeguard their sacred books, which they had transcribed with such care and read and listened to with such pious sentiments.

Qumran must have contained hundreds of rolls, mostly in leather or parchment, some in the cheaper and less durable papyrus. The biblical texts and commentaries and some of the books composed by the founder and his disciples and reflecting their spirit and institutions, were wrapped in cloth coverings and deposited four or five at a time in large jars which were carefully

closed with a lid. When everything was packed, they took the jars to the neighbouring caves to hide the precious treasures in the most inaccessible places available, in the hope no doubt of recovering them once the storm had blown over.

When the troops of the tenth Roman legion had captured and fired the monastery buildings, they proceeded to clean up the vicinity and came upon some of the caves. They tore up many of the sacred books, but many of these escaped their destructive zeal.

Subsequent revolts and final occupation by the Romans did not permit the monks to return to Qumran and salvage their library. Meanwhile the Essenes disappeared from history, never to return.

But sections of their library survived the ravages of time to be discovered in our days. The literature written during recent decades on the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Monks of Qumran already forms a respectable library.

IV SEARCHING AT MASADA

11. The End of an Epic

The term 'Dead Sea Scrolls', or perhaps more correctly 'Manuscripts from the Desert of Judah', applies not only to the biblical and non-biblical written texts discovered at Qumran, but also to those found since 1952 further south along the western side of the Dead Sea at Wadi Murabba'at and at Khirbet Mird, and particularly to the scrolls unearthed in 1964 in the fortress of Masada.

The only sources of information about the earlier history of the rock fortress of Masada, the last bastion to surrender to the Roman legions, are the writings of Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian who was himself a commander of the great revolt against the Romans.

In his *War of the Jews* (vii, 8-9), he describes the tragic end of the besieged. Knowing that every attempt at flight would be vain, the defenders resolved with their leader Elizer ben Yaiv that they should kill one another rather than fall into the hands of the enemy. Ten men were chosen who began the massacre after having set fire to the palace. From the general butchery only five children and two women escaped. When the Romans were able to hack their way into the smoking ruins, they found 960 dead bodies.

The findings of modern excavations tally

remarkably well with the description given by Josephus. Three centuries later, at the time of the Byzantine occupation, when the hermit monks withdrew to a more desolate region, St Euthymius turned one of the apartments of Herod's palace into a chapel. Among the Roman ruins can be found vestiges of the fortifications erected in the time of the Crusades. Masada inspired the Israel poet Yitzak Lamdan (b. 1900), who wrote a long epic poem bearing as title the name of the fortress.

12. Milestones of a Desert Rock

The original fortress, built by one of the Asmonean kings on a lofty isolated mountain top, 15 miles south of Engaddi and a mile west of the Dead Sea, was considerably enlarged and embellished by Herod the Great. This natural stronghold—sometimes called the Gibraltar of the Dead Sea—has been identified by some with the place where David took refuge when flying from Saul's anger (2 Sam 23:14). It is the best preserved and most impressive of the fortresses which king Herod built in the open desert, along little used routes, to be a refuge for him and his family, a safe place for his treasures, and a halting place on the way to foreign lands. Masada in particular was intended as a potential refuge against queen Cleopatra.

Ever since its rediscovery by Robinson and Wolcott in the middle of the nineteenth century, Masada has been visited by explorers, who admired the remains of the Roman camp and

circumvallation around the rock, and the ruins of Herod's structures on the all-but-inaccessible top.

Amateur exploration led in 1955 to soundings of the 20-acre plateau by an Israel archaeological expedition. This indicated that Masada could only be excavated by a large-scale expedition camping on the spot for a long period.

13. Buried Treasures Unearthed

Professor Yigael Yadin, of the Archaeological Department of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and more recently Deputy Prime Minister of the Israeli government, conducted in two seasons the operations of more than two thousand volunteers from 28 countries.

In a symposium on "Dead Sea Scrolls Research", held at Jerusalem on April 21st, 1965, on the occasion of the opening of the 'Shrine of the Book', Professor Yadin said that the recent discovery of portions of fourteen scrolls at Masada was extremely important because "here for the first time scrolls have been found, not in caves—where there is no direct archaeological evidence for dating them—but in archaeological excavations, at a site automatically dating them to before the year 73 of the Christian Era, the year the Jewish defenders took their own lives rather than surrender."

In a lecture given in Bombay on September 12th, 1966, the same archaeologist illustrated with slides the site of the exploration and the findings

of the excavations in Herod's three-tiered "hanging palace" and the other buildings of Masada. Cable-ferris had to be installed for lifting food, water and equipment to the mountain top. In eleven months of arduous work under difficult conditions (1963-1965), some 50,000 cubic metres of earth were shifted and fifteen kilometres of walls uncovered.

Their labours did not go unrewarded. Spade and shovel revealed porticos and colonnades, hypocausts, cisterns and rooms for the ritual baths, throne room, reception halls and workshops. Some walls and ceilings were ornamented with frescos and stuccos still in good condition; pavements appeared decorated with multi-coloured mosaics of simple geometric patterns and with floral designs complete with biblical grapes, figs and pomegranates.

This artistic work was all in the Hellenistic style but adapted to meet the Jewish restrictions against any images. Among the finds were quantities of domestic utensils, cosmetic goods and military material, such as basins, jars, stoves, shelves, wooden combs, arrows, hundreds of silver-plated scales of armour, heaps of stone-balls for the Roman catapults. A valuable discovery—valuable in more senses than one—was a cache of more than four thousand Jewish and Roman coins.

Of rare interest were seventeen silver shekels of the Revolt, with the inscription in Hebrew "Jerusalem the Holy—Shekel of Israel". Three

coins were also brought to light of the rare "Year Five" (of the Revolt), the last to be struck before the fall of the Temple in A.D. 70.

A large rectangular hall with two rows of columns and four rows of benches was apparently added by the Zealots to the original Herodian structures. In this Jerusalem-orientated building an *ostrakon*, or potsherd, was found with the inscription "priestly tithe", as well as more than a score of clay oil lamps and many glass vessels. Professor Yadin believes that this may have been a synagogue. If his inference is correct, then this is not only the earliest synagogue known, but the only one to survive from the times of the Second Temple.

In one of the rooms encased in the fortress walls, next to the "synagogue", was found the greatest prize so far—14 parchment scrolls. These fragmentary scrolls contained parts of Genesis, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Ezekiel and Psalms 81-85, identical in text, spelling and division of chapters with the traditional Hebrew Bible, and a first-century B.C. copy of the lost Hebrew original of Ecclesiasticus or "Wisdom of Ben Sirach", composed in Jerusalem about the year 190 B.C. Among the finds was also a fragment of the long-lost Hebrew original of the Book of Jubilees.

The fact that these scrolls were found with articles clearly belonging to the Revolt (the 17 shekels were found in the same room barely three feet from the psalm scroll), makes them of the highest archaeological importance: their latest possible date, A.D. 73, cannot be disputed.

The Ben Sirach scroll shows that the many scholars who maintained that the medieval copies of Ecclesiasticus—discovered in a Cairo synagogue in 1896—represent the original, were right. The Masada text, copied only a few decades after the Hebrew original was translated into Greek by Ben Sirach's grandson (as we read in the prologue of this book in our Bibles), is practically identical with the Cairo text. The newly found, but much older, text will clarify some passages corrupted by medieval copyists.



Translations

I. ANCIENT TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE

1. Original and Translations

Holy Scripture, the committing of God's message to human written language, is a historical fact that took place at a particular time in a particular place. Our understanding of Scripture, therefore, poses the problem of our shifting ourselves to ancient times and faraway places.

A concrete and basic point to tackle in this connection is the mastery of the original biblical languages or the use of suitable vernacular translations. The Church has throughout the centuries had recourse to both processes at different levels: there have been specialists conversant with the original text, and the Christian people have been provided with adequate versions.

From the days of Origen and Saint Jerome up to the appearance of the great encyclicals of Leo XIII (1893), Benedict XV (1920) and Pius XII (1943), and the promulgation of the decrees of Vatican II (1965) on the fostering of biblical studies, the importance of oriental languages has been acknowledged in the Church with almost uninterrupted uniformity.

What the Church has thought about translations of the Bible becomes manifest from the use she made of the Septuagint version in the apostolic age, from the interest and efforts of the Popes regarding translations into Latin when this was the most common language in the West, and from the contemporary movement in biblical studies which is producing a rich crop of more or less acceptable translations in the language of the people.

Today we read the Bible in translations. Only professional biblical scholars go back to the original text, to the great Hebrew edition by Rudolph Kittle of the Stuttgart Biblical Institute, or to the Greek editions of the New Testament by Nestle, von Soden, Tischendorf, Westcott-Hort, or that by Merk of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome.

The proto-canonical books of the Old Testament were written in Hebrew; the deutero-canonical are extant only in Greek versions. The New Testament was written in Greek, except for Matthew's Gospel, which was originally written in Aramaic. Greek belongs to the Indo-European,

Hebrew and Aramaic to the Semitic group of languages.

2. *The Septuagint*

One of the earliest and one of the most important translations of the Old Testament is that made at Alexandria two and a half centuries before Christ and known as the Septuagint (LXX). As a witness this translation is of the highest value, because it was done with great care by scholars who mastered both the Hebrew and the Greek tongues, and because it takes us some ten or twelve centuries nearer to the original than any existing Hebrew manuscript (exception made now of the recently discovered Dead Sea Scrolls).

After Alexander's conquests, the Jewish communities in Egypt came under the influence of Hellenization and gradually lost contact with the Hebrew language. King Ptolemy Philadelphus (according to the spurious letter of Aristeas, a Jewish scholar of the third century B.C) had the Hebrew Scriptures translated into Greek by a team of 70 or 72 scholars, six from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, summoned from Jerusalem and domiciled in the Island of Pharos in the delta of the Nile. The translation committee is said to have completed its task in 72 days. The segregation of the translators in different cells and the marvellous agreement of their different versions is a further embellishment of the story by Philo, the Greco-Jewish philosopher of Alexandria, Christ's contemporary, who wrote a large number of commentaries on the Old Testament.

In spite of the uneven merits of the various parts of the work, this rendering increased in prestige with the passing of time. The Egyptian Jews, and the Hellenistic synagogues in Palestine and elsewhere, East and West, received their knowledge of the Old Testament by means of the Septuagint. The spread of the Gospel message to the Gentiles was facilitated by this translation. Nations, to whom the Hebrew Scripture would have remained a closed book, became acquainted with the Old Testament writings through the Greek version.

In the East, Aramaic and Syriac versions soon followed, often grounded on the Septuagint; later appeared Coptic, Ethiopic, Arabic, Armenian, Georgian, Slavonic and Old Gothic translations.

3. The Vulgate and the New Vulgate

In the West, the Latin versions are of prime importance because it was through the medium of Latin that the Holy Scripture became part and parcel of Western civilization. The earliest Latin versions appeared in North Africa, South Gaul and Rome. Fresh versions and copies multiplied so bewilderingly fast that the situation caused great inconvenience in the public reading of Scripture, in liturgical usage, in catechetical instruction and in controversies with Jews and heretics. Church authorities, as guardians of the faith, became much concerned over a state of affairs that hampered seriously their apostolic action, based primarily as it was on the Word of God. The revision of the sacred text used in the

Latin Churches imposed itself as an urgent necessity.

The colossal task was entrusted by Pope Damasus to Saint Jerome, the most learned scholar of his day, who in 383 started his work of revision, which he completed twenty-two years later. He first emended at Rome the Four Gospels, and probably the other books of the New Testament according to the Greek, and the Psalter according to the Septuagint. Then at Bethlehem he revised the current Latin text of the proto-canonical books from Origen's edition of the Septuagint in his Hexapla, the six-fold text of the Old Testament in parallel columns. Finally he began a much larger project, the Latin translation of the Old Testament directly from the Hebrew and Aramaic.

This uniform and dignified translation encountered much opposition from Jerome's contemporaries, but was more and more appreciated by succeeding generations and became the standard version of the whole Western Church. Since the thirteenth century it was known as the *Vulgate*, the common or popular translation.

Copied by hand throughout the Middle Ages until the invention of printing, the Vulgate suffered the common fate of texts copied by hand. The Latin Vulgate was the first book in 1455 ever to come from Gutenberg's mechanical contraption. A century later, the Council of Trent, whilst declaring the Vulgate authentic and official for the Latin rite, expressed the wish for a fresh revision. This, the Sixto-Clementine edition,

appeared in 1592, but left much to be desired from the critical point of view.

It was not until 1907, however, that an official revision of the text was ordered by Saint Pius X, who entrusted the task to the Benedictine Order.

The Tridentine decree on the authenticity of the Vulgate was some times misunderstood, until it was finally interpreted by Pius XII in 1943. The authenticity intended by the Council was juridical, not critical. This means that the Vulgate is authenticated by its long use in the Church as free of error in faith and morals and is therefore a safe source of Catholic doctrine. Its critical authenticity is not affirmed, except to that degree which makes it a substantially faithful witness of the original text.

Before the end of the Second Vatican Council, Paul VI entrusted the work of translation to a special commission. In April 1979, John Paul II published a new Latin edition of the Bible for official church use, called the New Vulgate. Involving the work of dozens of scholars over a period of 13 years, it has the advantages of modern scientific scholarship. The complete edition has been published in eight volumes and declared the "normative" version for liturgical use.

In his apostolic constitution "*Scripturarum Thesaurus*", John Paul II stated that if in former times the Church judged the old Vulgate sufficiently valuable for the Christian people to learn the word of God, the new Vulgate will be able to achieve this all the more satisfactorily.

II. ENGLISH VERSIONS OF THE BIBLE

4. Older Translations

Versions of the whole or of part of the Bible in the language of the common people began to appear in the eighth century in England and Germany, and then in France, Italy, Spain, Holland, Poland, Hungary and Bohemia.

Restricting ourselves here to the English language Bibles, worthy of mention among the earliest translations are the Anglo-Saxon ones of *Caedmon*, *Bede*, *King Alfred* and *Aelfric*. In 1382 *John Wycliffe* offered to the English public the first complete rendering of the entire Bible from the Latin Vulgate.

In 1505 Bishop *John Fisher*, the future Cardinal and canonized Martyr, initiated English Bible translation in print by issuing the Penitential Psalms. But the Reformers soon outstripped the Catholic scholars in this field. Their best known versions are those of *William Tyndale*, *Miles Coverdale* and *Richard Taverner*. These productions were overshadowed in 1539 by the first official version, recognized by the English Parliament, and known as the *Great Bible* because of its large folio size.

Immediately after Queen Elizabeth's accession to the throne in 1558, the *Geneva Bible* came into honour and remained in usage among English-speaking Protestants for a century, despite the

appearance a decade later of a second authorized English Bible known as the *Bishops' Bible*.

5. *The Rheims-Douay Version*

In the face of this translating activity among the Reformers, the need was felt in Catholic circles, especially in connection with the aim of re-establishing the Catholic faith in England, of having an English Bible that they might consider properly their own. Catholic refugees in the continent were responsible for the undertaking, chiefly Gregory Martin and William (later Cardinal) Allen. In 1582 the New Testament was published at Rheims. After a delay of almost three decades the Old Testament appeared at Douay. This Rheims-Douay translation, in its several revisions throughout the last three centuries, particularly that of Bishop Challoner in the eighteenth century, has done most to acquaint English-speaking Catholics in every continent with the Word of God.

6. *The Authorized and the Revised Versions*

James of Scotland, who succeeded Queen Elizabeth in 1603, showed considerable interest in theological matters and Biblical studies, and ordered that a translation be made of the whole Bible, as consonant as could be with the original Hebrew and Greek. The first edition of the King James version appeared in 1611. Known as the Authorized Version, because 'appointed to be

read in churches', it has become in its various revisions *the Bible* for the vast majority of English-speaking Protestants for well over three centuries, a major monument of English literature.

In the course of time a revision of the Authorized Version became necessary, because of changes in the English language, discovery of new manuscripts, and the progress of textual criticism. This was undertaken in 1870 and completed in 1885 when the Revised Version came off the press. An edition incorporating the preferences of the American scholars associated with the work appeared in 1901 and is known as the American Standard Version. The Revised Standard Version, the Bible most popular today among American Protestants, was completed (Old and New Testaments and the Apocrypha) only in 1957, and is a truly impressive product of American biblical scholarship. It is a revision of the American Standard Version of 1901 and the Authorized Version of 1611.

The publication, in June 1965, of the Catholic edition of the New Testament of the Revised Standard Version, with the Church's *Imprimatur*, was a remarkable sign of the ecumenical spirit among Christians powerfully fostered by the Second Vatican Council and by the World Council of Churches. This Catholic edition, prepared by the Catholic Biblical Association of Great Britain, contains an introduction explaining the history and purpose of the adaptation, explanatory notes and an appendix of textual changes.

In May 1966, Cardinal Cushing of Boston gave

his *Imprimatur* to an edition of the Oxford Annotated Bible, which uses the Revised Standard Version. Some changes have been made in the annotations of this well-known Oxford Bible, but none have been made in the Revised Standard Version translation itself, which includes what Catholics regard the complete Bible.

A remarkable project of international and inter-faith scope is the *Anchor Bible*, a new translation in thirty-eight volumes, each with an introduction and notes, under the general editorship of W. F. Albright and D. N. Freedman. Some of the best Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant scholars in biblical research are contributing individual volumes.

7. Some Modern Protestant Versions

Other modern versions widely used by Protestants today are those of *James Moffat* and *Edgar Goodspeed*. The trend of a markedly modern idiom in Bible translation reached its peak during the second World War and in the years following in the free translation or rather close paraphrase of the New Testament Letters of *Bishop Wand*, in the man-in-the-street version of the New Testament by the Anglican Canon *J. B. Phillips*, in *Dr E. V. Rieu's* translation of the Four Gospels, and in the *New English Bible* of which the New Testament appeared in 1961.

III. CATHOLIC VERSIONS OF THE BIBLE

8. *Modern English Translations*

Among Catholics the Rheims-Douay-Challoner tradition continued well into the 20th century.

It is generally admitted that the Modernist controversy of the first decade of this century left deep wounds on the body of the Catholic theological and biblical scholarship. The danger of rationalism and modernism did little to encourage the study, among Catholics, of those sciences, which were essential to the progress of biblical scholarship. Up to the second world war, Catholic exegesis exhibited what many have called the mentality of the beleaguered fortress. In the prevailing climate of opinion it was better to adhere to what was thought to be safe doctrine than to make sorties into hostile territory. In such defensive atmosphere creative scholarship was extremely unlikely.

A decisive factor in the change of attitude among Catholic exegetes was the leadership of the Dominican scholar M. J. Lagrange, who believed that it was possible to conduct a sincere scientific investigation of biblical problems without jeopardizing one's personal belief or the faith of others.

The greatest encouragement in this field was given by the encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu* (1943), in which Pope Pius XII pointed out that biblical

scholars must not be treated with suspicion when they face difficulties valiantly in their efforts to find interpretations consonant with the teaching of the Church and in harmony with proved conclusions of the secular sciences.

At the end of last century, the American Dominican Father *Francis Spencer* prepared an independent translation of the New Testament from the original Greek, which was published only in 1937. The *Westminster Version* New Testament, edited by Father Lattey, was based on the Greek and Hebrew texts. The *Confraternity of Christian Doctrine* New Testament (1941) based on the Latin Vulgate, was adopted for use in public reading in the United States. Two years later, the great encyclical on biblical studies encouraged the American scholars to produce a completely fresh version of the Old Testament from the Hebrew. Currently they are at work with the translation of the New Testament again, this time from the Greek and with the collaboration of non-Catholic scholars. The readings used in the liturgy are already from this fresh translation. Another tribute to American Catholic scholarship is the New Testament version from the Greek by *Kleist-Lilly*.

Perhaps the best known of the modern English Catholic translations of the entire Bible in England is that of *Monsignor Ronald Knox*. Started before the publication of the encyclical above-mentioned, this version was based on the Latin Vulgate but was done in the light of the Hebrew and Greek originals. It was authorized by the English, Welsh and Scottish hierarchy for public reading, and it

has commonly been greeted as a literary masterpiece.

Anglican and Catholic leaders, as well as Biblical scholars of all denominations, welcomed in 1965 the publication of the *Catholic edition* of the American Protestant *Revised Standard Version* of the New Testament, calling it a major ecumenical break-through. Publication of the companion Catholic edition of the R S V Old Testament followed some months later. It has been approved by the Hierarchies for public reading.

The long awaited translation in contemporary English of the *Jerusalem Bible* appeared in October 1966. The original draft was for the most part made from the original Hebrew and Greek texts, including some of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and then compared with the authoritative version of *La Bible de Jerusalem* of the French Dominicans, which twenty years ago was widely acclaimed as one of the great Bibles of all times. The succinct and up-to-date introductions and the rich notes of the French have been incorporated in the English Bible. This was immediately added by the English Hierarchy to the list of versions approved for liturgical use, but with the word "Lord" substituted for "Yahweh" in any passages used in the liturgy.

9. *Other Vernacular Versions*

One effect of the progress of biblical sciences during recent years has been a movement in various countries to secure fresh Catholic versions of the Bible reflecting the originals as fully and

directly as possible. Such undertakings have borne fruit in complete translations in *French, German, Italian, Spanish, Catalan, Dutch and Maltese*. This movement obtained the greatest impetus when Pope Pius XII declared that the endorsement of the Latin Vulgate by the Council of Trent was not intended to be a barrier against translation into the vernacular tongue, even directly from the original texts themselves. Gone were the days when some considered the study of oriental languages a mere show of learning of questionable value, and criticism of the text of the Vulgate as a rejection of the authority of the Church in proclaiming the Vulgate's authenticity. Pius XII's encyclical was hailed as a sign that the era of Modernism was officially closed, that the line between what was dangerous in doctrine and textual criticism and what was not had been clearly drawn. Catholic exegetes and translators had now recovered the true freedom of the children of God.

10. The Bible in Indian dress

In India too Catholic scholars, though trailing a long way behind their Protestant brethren, are making determined efforts these days to translate the New Testament into various vernacular languages directly from the Greek originals. The need of having in the vernacular the various texts required in the liturgy has added a fresh impetus to this movement.

In March 1965 there appeared at Allahabad from the Society of Saint Paul Press the first

Catholic translation of the Old Testament into *Hindi*. Father Stanislaus Wald, S.V.D., who had been commissioned to do the translation by the bishops of North India, worked at it with the help of several experts over a period of nine years. The Old Testament has been printed and bound together with a revised Hindi version of the New Testament.

In *Marathi* we have in two volumes with rich notes the entire New Testament translated from the Greek by Fr M. Zinzer under the pen-name of Yeshudas. At present an ecumenical translation of the New Testament is in the process of printing and may appear in 1982. More than half of the books of the Old Testament have already been done into Marathi. Among the translators there are two Jesuits from Pune and two priests of the archdiocese of Bombay.

The first Catholic translation of the four Gospels and the Acts in *Gujarati* came off the press in 1966. On March 8, 1981 the complete Bible in Gujarati—a 1600-page volume, illustrated with winsome sketches by Annie Valloton was released at Anand by the Gujarat Sahitya Prakash. It is the work of two scholars: Shri Negindas Parekh and Fr Isudas Cueli, S. J. It has been hailed by reviewers as a version in a style which is at the same time simple and popular and of exquisite literary taste, and for all that remarkably faithful to the Hebrew and Greek originals.

Various books of the Bible were first translated into *Malayalam* by Protestant missionaries and Syrian Orthodox priests throughout the nineteenth

century. The whole Bible was issued in 1910. Catholic scholars brought out the Gospels and Acts first in 1905; the entire New Testament was in the hands of Catholics in 1962, and the Old Testament in 1965.

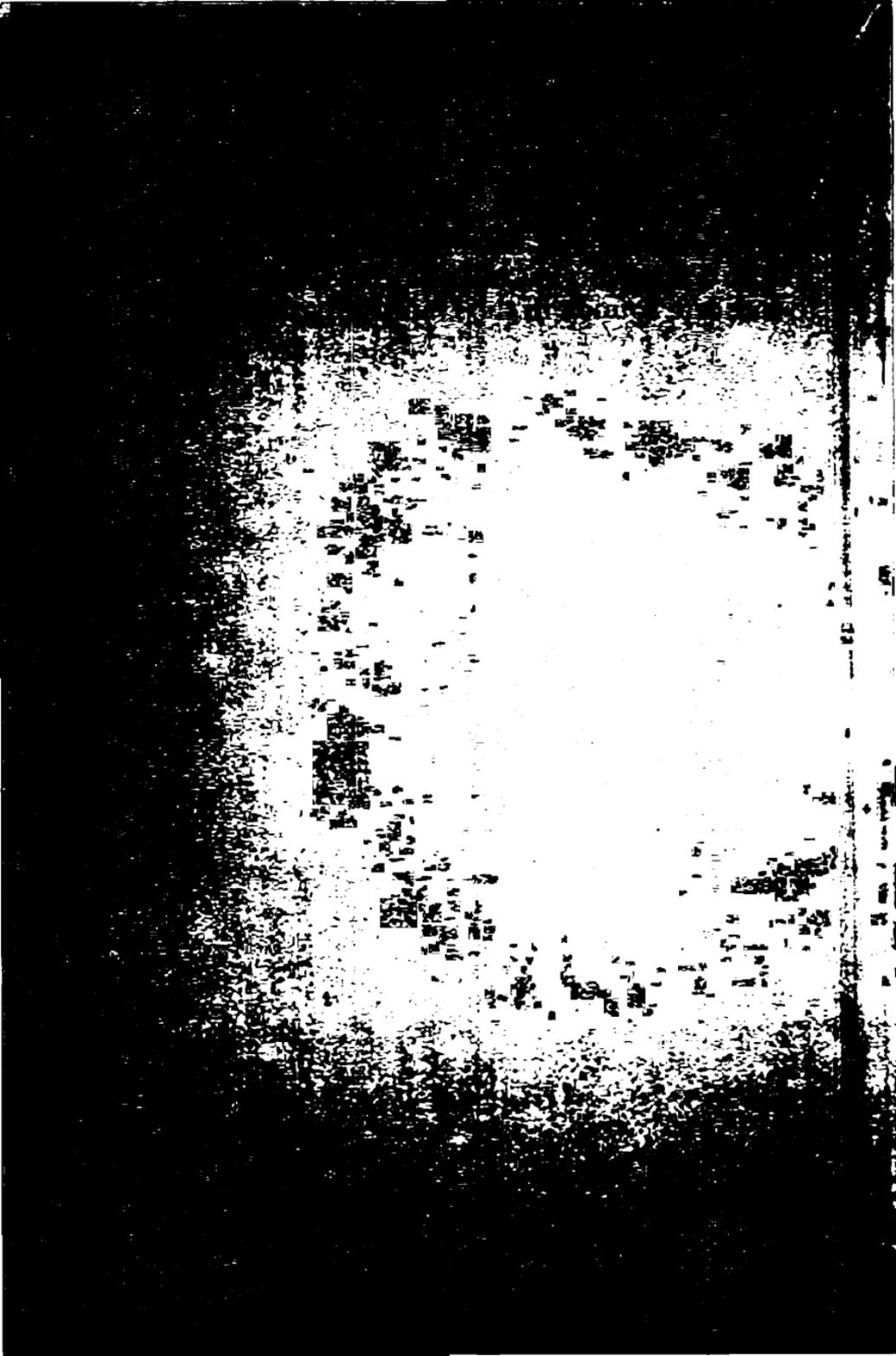
The Catholic Tamilnad Bible Commission has since 1961 been working at the translation of the New Testament from the Greek into *Tamil*, and has so far completed the translation of the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and nine epistles of Saint Paul. The Commission finished the whole New Testament in 1968. The work on the whole is a faithful, simple and correct translation. A fairly good literary standard is kept up throughout.

On April 10, 1979, at the Shillong Cathedral, the New *Khasi* Bible was released to the public by the Archbishop in a function chaired by the Minister for Border Areas, Government of Meghalaya. The 2300-page volume is a completely new translation of the Bible done by a team of eight. It is the first complete Catholic Bible in North East India, and clearly a religious and literary landmark, enriched with footnotes and introductions to every single book, maps, a glossary, analytical index and 48 full-page colour illustrations. The first edition of ten thousand copies was sold out even before release.

In the *Santali* language, Fr J. B. Panepinto has published the entire New Testament, and the Sunday and weekday Lectionaries. Early in 1981 he published the Deuterocanonical Books.

The New Testament has been printed in a

phonetic script for an adivasi tribe with no written language. One thousand copies have been printed in India for the use of Ganit Indians who live in South Gujarat. The translation is the work of Fr Joseph Lobo who has adapted the Gujarati script to indicate sounds in the Gamit tongue.



Biblical Languages

I. HEBREW, ARAMAIC, GREEK

1. God Speaks to His Children

In its thirteenth article, the Constitution of Vatican II on Divine Revelation refers to the marvellous “condescension” of God, who in his wisdom has adapted his language to our human weakness. The word, taken from the language of St John Chrysostom, is *syn-kata-basis* or “con-descension”.

Condescension means stooping down to another’s level in order to help him. God spoke to us in a human language through the prophets of old, through his only-begotten Son, and through the sacred writers. He expressed his thought in human words and turns of speech, lowering himself to our own level that we might understand his message, even as a cultured adult might adapt his

speech to the capacity of a young child by having recourse to baby talk.

When the men to whom God wished to reveal his innermost thought spoke Hebrew, he revealed himself in this tongue; later in Aramaic; finally in Greek. The sayings of Christ himself, who must have spoken the Aramaic dialect of his day and country, were later transmitted to us in a particular type of Greek. The biblical languages are these three, because the revelation was effected in the place where and at the time when these were in current use.

2. Trilingualism

Pilgrims to Palestine some years ago, on reaching the Holy City by train, used to be greeted with sign-posts bearing the word "Jerusalem" in three languages: English, Arabic and Hebrew. An article of the Mandate for Palestine decreed that these were the official languages of Palestine. (We are used to such three-language formulas in India.)

In the time of Christ there were also three official languages in the Holy Land: Aramaic, Greek and Latin. Saint John tells us that the Roman Procurator ordered the title of condemnation on the cross of Jesus to be written in these three languages, so that everyone might understand.

There are three languages also in the Bible: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Most of the Old

Testament was written in Hebrew. Only some sporadic chapters of the Old Testament and St Matthew's Gospel were originally written in Aramaic. The book of Wisdom and II Maccabees in the Old Testament and all the books of the New Testament, barring St Matthew's Gospel, were written in Greek.

Hebrew and Aramaic are closely related and belong to the Semitic group. Greek is a very different language which belongs to the Indo-European family, as do Latin and Sanskrit.

3 . Hebrew and Aramaic

In the time of our Lord, Aramaic had taken the place of Hebrew as the colloquial language of Palestine (Mk 5:41), and had usurped its very name. Accordingly Aramaic is actually meant when "Hebrew" is mentioned by St John or in the Acts. (Jn 5:2; 19:13, 17, 20; Acts 21:40; 22:2; 26:14; Rev 9:11).

Hebrew and Aramaic have several common characteristics. Both are written and read from right to left. The roots from which the words are derived are usually composed of three consonants. Vowels help to express various modifications of the radical sense, and originally were not written out, since a reader familiar with the structure of the language could supply them from the context. The case is somewhat similar to the three-letter symbols used in the registration plate of our motor cars or to the code designations for railway stations which we find in our tickets. Modern

Hebrew is still taught and learned in Israel (if not without tears) without vowels.

The simple form of the verb is modified by added letters, lengthened vowels or reduplicated radicals to express intensive, causative, reciprocal and reflexive action. The Semitic verb has no tenses in our sense of the word, but modes of action. The action is either completed or incomplete, but both may express past, present or future time according to the context. The syntax is extremely simple. There is hardly any machinery for making a clause subordinate. The idea attains its fulness rather by juxtaposition of separate expressions, which individually may vary, but which together produce a pattern all the more striking because they are not set and rigid.

Hebrew was the language of the Israelites from their entry into the Promised Land in the thirteenth century B.C. up to within a few hundred years before the birth of Christ. They had probably adopted it from the native Canaanites. Hebrew enjoyed its golden age in the eighth century in the time of Isaiah. From the time of the Babylonian exile it began to be tainted with traces of Aramaic. This was the language of the nomadic tribes that spread from Arabia into Mesopotamia, and silently infiltrated to Syria and Palestine. Aramaic, in fact, became the *lingua franca* of the Persian empire and of the whole Semitic world up to the time of the Arab domination in the seventh century. Round about the fourth century B.C., Aramaic began to take the place of Hebrew as the language of the people. Hebrew gradually became a dead

language and was used exclusively for religious purposes. This was its only use at the time of Christ's birth. In our own days, thanks to the efforts of Eliezer Ben Yehudah, Hebrew has become once more a living language and a vehicle of a literature, first in the Zionist settlements, and then in the young State of Israel. It was in Hebrew that the President of Israel addressed Pope Paul VI when he visited Israel as a pilgrim in January 1964.

Aramaic was the common tongue of the Aramean Semites, whose cultural and commercial influence spread throughout Syria and Palestine. In its Galilean dialect it was the mother-tongue of Jesus and his apostles. Jesus quoted Psalm 22 in Aramaic from the Cross (Mt 27:46). His characteristic accent betrayed Peter as a northerner in the night of the Passion at Jerusalem (Mt 26:73). The episode is reminiscent of that of the Ephraimites (Judg 12:6), who were slain by the Gileadites in their thousands as aliens, when it was found that they were unable to pronounce the sibilant *sh* in the word *shibboleth*, a word that has entered the English language and denotes a test-word, a party slogan or a password. In the first world war Turks were similarly detected by Arabs at the crossing of the Jordan through their incorrect pronunciation of the emphatic *s*.

Aramaic was long thought to have disappeared as a spoken language. In fact, however, it is now known that in the Qalamoun Mounains, on the Syrian side of the Lebanons, a community of three small villages, the largest called Maloula, have never ceased using it. The valley is a remote,

unchanging corner of the ancient world, seldom seen by the Holy Land visitor.

4. *Biblical Greek*

Greek is the third language of the Bible. It is the original language of the New Testament books and of the Septuagint version of the Old Testament. It was also the liturgical language of the Church in the first two centuries, since this was then the vernacular of the people in the large centres of population. The rise of Greek as the language of culture and international communication east of the Mediterranean Sea and in Egypt dates from the conquests of Alexander the Great (d. 323 B.C.). Though it was the language of the cities at the time of Christ, it never succeeded in displacing Aramaic in the east or Coptic in Egypt with the common folk. "Hellenizing" was fashionable; not a few Jews, even among the poor classes, sported Greek names such as Andrew and Philip.

This Greek, however, differed widely from the Greek of Xenophon, Isocrates or Demosthenes. It was the *Koine*, or popular spoken language of those centuries, something like the "bazaar Hindustani" in India. It is no closer to classical Greek than today's radio announcer is to Shakespeare.

The *Koine* or common language, though strongly influenced by the Semitic genius of the languages of Palestine and the neighbouring regions, is basically Attic, with considerable simplification

in morphology and vocabulary. Declensions and conjugations are simplified and occasionally assimilated by analogy. Co-ordination of dependent clauses is preferred to subordination and direct speech to indirect. The popular character of the *Koine* is manifested by sense constructions, anacolutha and other grammatical irregularities.

Nearly all the pages of the New Testament are written in the language of daily conversation, which non-literary texts written on papyrus discovered in Egypt have revealed to us. Saint Luke, when he so wishes, can write with the refinement of the classical authors, but he is an exception.

The Greek of the Bible is not the language of the learned, but it breathes forth the fresh and vigorous appeal of a new and vital message in everyman's everyday language.

Owing to its simplified structure as compared with classical Greek and to its great diversity (as a result of foreign influences, suppleness in adaptation, and freedom in borrowing) the *Koine* language was particularly well qualified to become the international language of the Hellenistic Age, and by this very fact it facilitated the spread of Christianity.

II. WHAT LANGUAGE DID JESUS SPEAK?

5. *Aramaic*

In the days of our Lord the common language of Palestine was Aramaic, which had supplanted Hebrew. Aramaic was the language which Jesus learned from his blessed Mother at Nazareth and which he employed in his teaching. There are several Aramaic words used in the Gospel text, some of them spoken by Christ himself: *Abba*, *Ephpheta*, *Aceldama*, *Gabbatha*, *Golgotha*, *Raca*, *Mammon*, *Kephas*, *Rabboni*; and even whole phrases, such as the *Talitha cumi*, which Jesus addressed to Jairus' dead daughter, and his words from the cross, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*?

An unequivocal proof that the people did no longer even understand Hebrew is found in the fact attested in the *Talmud*, the collection of Jewish rabbinical literature, that since the Sacred Scriptures were read in Hebrew in the synagogues, they had to be translated into Aramaic for the benefit of the congregation.

Jesus, however, was no doubt familiar with the literary Hebrew of the Scriptures and the liturgy. In St Luke's Gospel we see him reading in the synagogue. "He stood up to read. The book given to him was the book of the prophet Isaiah; so he opened" (Lk 4:16) and read, apparently without the slightest difficulty.

6. Greek

Greek and Latin were the other two languages spoken in Palestine at this time, at least in the larger towns.

Greek was the language of the upper classes, the rich and the powerful, besides being the international business language. Orthodox Palestinian Jews loathed everything Greek; this is shown in the resistance movement of the Maccabean period. After all Greek was a synonym for pagan. They considered the Greek language the thin end of the wedge to introduce the heathen ways and manners among the Chosen People. A passage in the *Talmud* reflected this feeling: "He who teaches his son Greek is accursed like him who keeps pigs."

A parallel to this opposition can be found in Cato the Censor, the frugal Roman farmer and stern reformer who about the same time resisted the infiltration of Greek culture as a menace to the characteristic virtues of the ancient Romans, to the point of banning from the city every Greek philosopher and rhetorician. In the end, however, he could not stem the avalanche from the East, and as an old man he betook himself to the study of the Greek language, which he found a considerable asset in his business dealings.

It has often been argued that Jesus spoke Greek. Saint Mark tells us that a pagan Greek-speaking woman from Syro-Phoenicia besought Jesus that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. The conversation, with the quick repartee of dogs

eating under the table of the crumbs left by the children, may have been carried on in Greek; or perhaps in Aramaic. Again it has been suggested that the conversation between Jesus and the Roman centurion, as well as the dialogue between Jesus and Pilate, were carried on in Greek.

It is a fact that not a single Greek quotation, not even an allusion, is to be found among our Lord's sayings, whereas there are a great many in St Paul. Despite the undoubted infiltration of Hellenism into Palestine, our Lord lived in a specifically Jewish atmosphere: this is the impression one receives from reading the Gospels. His lessons to the people, his discussions with the Pharisees, his dialogues with the Jerusalem authorities, all belong to the purely Jewish world of ideas and interests, with hardly any distinguishable trace of Hellenic influence.

7. Latin

Latin had in Palestine only an official status. It was the language of the hated imperial decrees, as the one ordering the census; it was the speech of the centurion and the Roman troops, and that of the detested tax-collectors and of the inscriptions on Caesar's coins. Its very sound reminded the Jews of the bondage under a foreign yoke. Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells us that instructions sent from imperial Rome were always accompanied by a Greek translation.

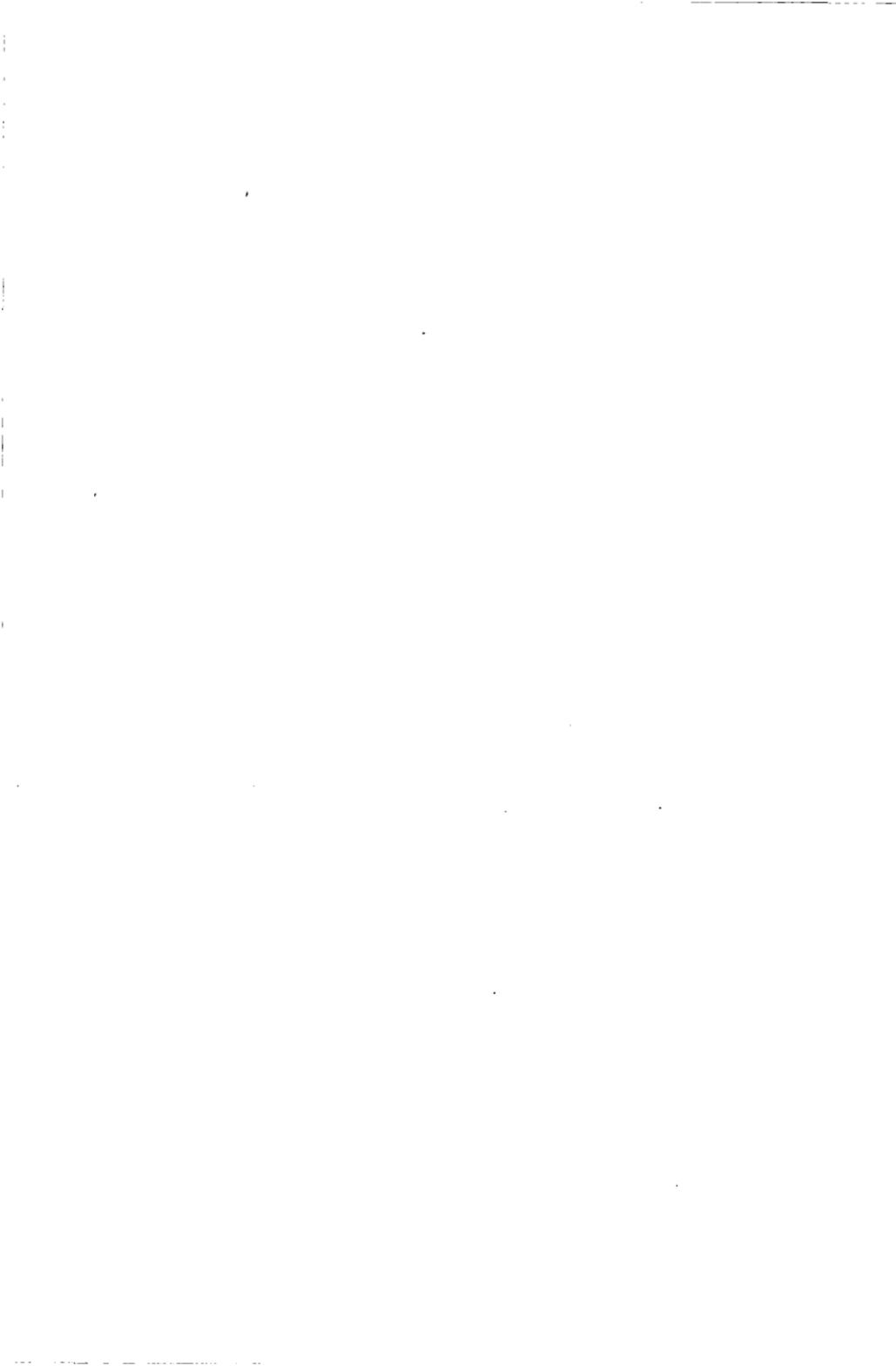
It is possible that Jesus had an occasion of learning the Latin language, but there seems to be no proof to show that he ever spoke it.

8. *Testimony of Pilgrim Nun*

It is of interest to read what the Spanish nun Etheria, sometimes known as Sylvia, wrote in the diary of her pilgrimage to the Holy Land at the close of the fourth century, concerning the use of various languages in the sacred liturgy.

“In that province (Palestine) one section of the people knows Greek and Aramaic, another section Greek alone, and a third Aramaic only. So, since the bishop, although he knows Aramaic, always speaks in Greek and never in Aramaic, there is always a priest present who translates into Aramaic what the bishop says in Greek, so that all may understand. The lessons are read in Greek, but there is always one who translates them into Aramaic in order that all the people may understand them.” Etheria then adds a detail concerning the Latin tongue: “There are also Latins, that is those who know neither Aramaic nor Greek; and so that they may not feel slighted (*“ne contristentur”*) explanation is made for them too, for there are other Greco-Latin brothers and sisters who explain to them in Latin.”

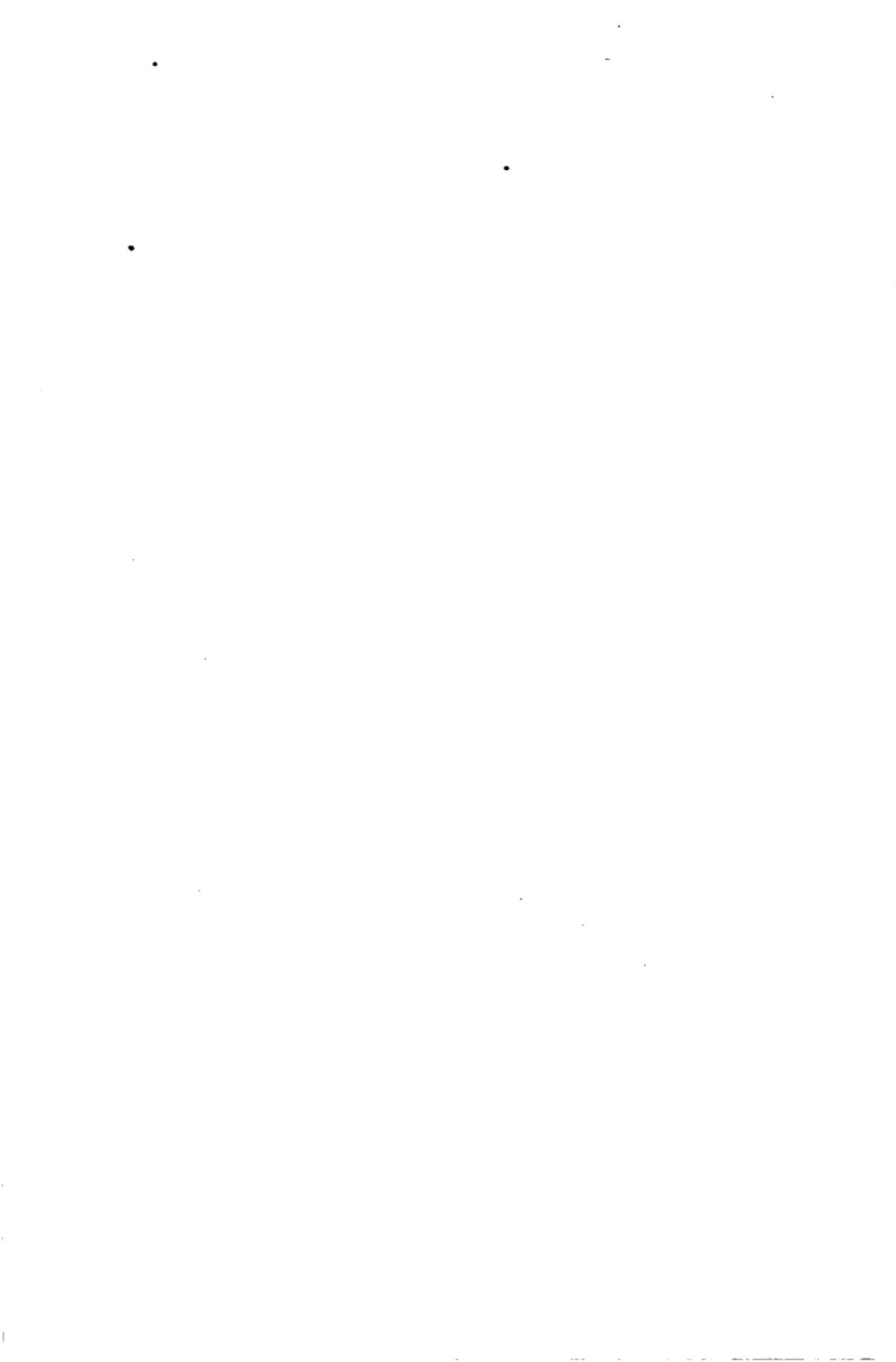
We in India, who must often have a notice or pastoral letter or sermon interpreted in two or three languages for the sake of the various sections of the congregation, can sympathize with the early Christians, whose linguistic troubles the enterprising Etheria describes.



2

Jewish Religious Groups

5. Scribes and Doctors
6. The Three Great Sects
7. Publicans
8. Sinners
9. Zealots and Herodians
10. Nazirites and Proselytes
11. Gentiles
12. Samaritans
13. Priesthood and Sanhedrin



5

Scribes and Doctors of the Law

Readers of the Gospels and the Acts are familiar with the Scribes and Doctors of the Law, with the Pharisees and Sadducees, Publicans and Sinners, Gentiles and Samaritans, Priests and Levites, High Priests and members of the Sanhedrin. They may be less familiar with the Zealots and Herodians, the Nazirites and Proselytes. The Essenes do not cross our path at all in the New Testament. We shall here devote short chapters to each group.

1. Quill-drivers and Lawyers

The Scribes appear often in the Synoptic Gospels, almost always associated with the Pharisees. They were men skilled in the Law, or, we would call them, jurists or lawyers.

'Scribe' denoted primarily the man of the Law, whether priest or layman, Pharisee or Sadducee. But in actual fact, at the time of Jesus, very few Scribes were priests and Sadducees; the overwhelming majority were laymen of Pharisaic beliefs. That is why the Gospels couple the Scribes and Pharisees.

Originally the Scribe (*Sofer*) was a public writer employed to draw up legal documents, or a clerk who made copies of the Law and other parts of the Scriptures. The most noted of the earlier Scribes was Ezra (Ezra 7:6), who was also a priest, the prototype of later scholars who were professional interpreters of the Law.

In the Middle Ages when in the turmoil of barbaric invasion and destruction, thousands of monks copied tens of thousands of manuscripts in hundreds of monasteries throughout Europe, thereby preserving for posterity the treasures of the past, the Jewish scribe Ezra was held in great honour. (Let us remember that in those days practically all clerks were clerics!) Clad in ecclesiastical (or clerical) garb, he appears in an illumination in the *Codex Amiatinus*, a work (including some clerical errors!) of an English copyist of the early eighth century, that rests in the Biblioteca Laurenziana at Florence.

In the New Testament the scribes are called *grammateis*, or more exactly *nomikoi*, rendered 'lawyers', and *nomodidaskaloi*, 'teachers of the Law'. These intellectuals of Judaism were generally addressed by the honorific title of *Rabbi*, equivalent to our *Punditji*.

The principal functions of the Scribes were three-fold: legislative, judicial, doctrinal. They enacted practical applications of the Mosaic code to changed conditions. Being well versed in the Torah, they were especially suited for the office of judges or assessors in the courts, and not a few of them belonged to the Sanhedrin or supreme council. They were the recognized instructors of students of the Law, each prominent doctor gathering about him a company of disciples. Hillel and Shammai, with their rival schools, had been the leading exponents of the Law a decade before the birth of Christ.

The profession of Scribes was the normal preparation for almost all careers. It opened the door to every honour in the political and religious life of the Chosen People, for a Scribe was at once consultor-at-law and attorney, a magistrate and an expert jurist, a preacher and a teacher, a grammarian and a rhetorician.

2. Authority of the Scribes

Because of this triple function, the authority and prestige of the Scribes was very considerable and it rivalled that of the priests. In fact, at the time of Jesus, while the priesthood had kept its liturgical duties and its rank in the hierarchy of the Jewish theocracy, it had lost all influence so far as the spiritual formation of the multitude was concerned. The true spiritual father of the people, their catechist and moral guide, was no longer the priest but the Scribe.

As the priesthood gradually became identified with the Sadducees, the lay doctor of the law became increasingly Pharisaic. Thus at length the sphere of the priesthood was restricted to the temple liturgy and political intrigue, while the Scribe sat as teacher in the schools of the Law, preached as representative of Moses in the synagogues, and moved as model of holiness through the streets and in the homes of the reverent multitude.

Scribes were assured of a prominent position in the Jewish community, since the entire religious and social life of the Jews was centred in the Law. From the Talmud we learn that they did not fail to impress upon the people a sense of their importance. They held that in many instances a son must prefer his teacher to his own father. The Gospels point out that many of them were ambitious of honour, seeking the first places at meals and the prominent seats at the synagogues, and having their hands kissed at the market place. They sought to distinguish themselves from the common folk by wearing long robes, and by broadening their phylacteries used at prayer and the fringes or tassels attached to their cloaks.

The road to this distinction was a long one. It often began in boyhood, learning—as Saint Paul did—“at the feet” of some well-known master (who taught sitting down while pupils squatted at his feet; as it is often done in India today). It was not likely that the student would finish his course and be able to teach in his turn before he was forty years of age.

Seeing the respected position of leadership of the Scribes in the Jewish community, it is somewhat surprising but revealing that Saint-Matthew (7:29) says that Jesus taught with authority, *not* like the Scribes.

The explanation comonly given for this remark is that whereas the Scribes argued from Scripture and from the commentaries of earlier interpreters, Jesus spoke in his own name. This applies admirably to his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. That was not a compilation of quotations from the Law and from Jewish tradition, but his own doctrinal manifesto in which he interpreted and even modified prescriptions of the Law without appealing to anybody else's authority (Mt 5:21-47).

3 . Jesus and the Scribes

At the arrival of the wise men from the East at Jerusalem, the Scribes were consulted by King Herod regarding the birthplace of the Messiah. This was a problem of biblical interpretation which was precisely their field of interest and competence. At the age of twelve, Jesus was found in the Temple sitting in the midst of the teachers or Scribes.

As Jesus began preaching his Gospel without having attended the school of any great Scribe, without seeking their approbation or being attached to their oral traditions, it was inevitable that sooner or later he should come in conflict

with them. Some Scribes charged Jesus with blasphemy for forgiving sin, and accused him of violating the Sabbath day by curing people on that day, and of allowing his disciples to eat with unwashed hands. They murmured against him for eating with sinners; they sought to test him on the interpretation of the Law by bringing an adulteress before him; they questioned him on his authority to teach the people in the Temple; and as members of the Sanhedrin they had a large share in the responsibility for his death.

Jesus himself, while he reproached them for destroying the work of God by their tradition, bore witness to their learning: "The Scribes and Pharisees have established themselves in the place from which Moses used to teach; do what they tell you." He severely rebuked them for their hypocrisy and uttered eight woes against them. Yet there were among them sincere souls, such as the one who asked Jesus which was the first and greatest commandment, accepted his answer, and was told that he was not far from the kingdom of God.

6

The Three Great Sects

I. THE PHARISEES

1. Origin, Name and Recruitment

In all probability the Pharisees originated in the period before the Maccabean wars, in a reaction against the Hellenizing spirit which swept over Palestine and manifested itself in the readiness of a section of the population to adopt Greek ways and customs. They may be considered a continuation of the *Chasidim*, or Devotees, of the Maccabean age, who had upheld the strictest application of the Torah. Flavius Josephus defined the Pharisees as "a body of Jews who profess to be more religious than the rest, and to explain the laws more precisely" (*Wars*, ii, 8, 14).

The name 'Pharisee' means *separated* or *separatist*. The separation referred to was not only from the Gentiles (which was common to all Jews); the Pharisees, who considered themselves as holy and

pure, tended to keep aloof from the common folk as being morally unclean and ignorant of the minute ritualistic regulations of the Law. The common herd, the ignorant and the sinners were lumped together under the scornful designation of '*am-ha-'ares*, 'the people of the land'.

There is every reason to believe that many Pharisees regarded the Carpenter of Nazareth as one of "these common folk who have no knowledge of the law" (Jn 7:49). Jesus was accused precisely of associating with publicans and sinners, of neglecting the ritual purifications, of violating the Sabbath rest and not observing the traditional feasts.

The party was recruited from all classes of the Jewish world. However, the priestly class furnished few members and the great majority of the Pharisees were laymen. The chief among them were Scribes, and this explains why in the Gospel the Scribes and Pharisees appear closely united in common action, and the two names seem to be almost interchangeable. It was especially through the Scribes that the party exercised its influence among the masses and in the Sanhedrin.

2. Characteristics

According to Josephus, the Pharisees' distinctive characteristics were austerity, respect for the ancients and tradition, love of peace and harmony with all. In religious matters they believed in Providence, in man's free will, the immortality of

the soul, the resurrection of the flesh, reward and punishment in a future life.

This description is rather flattering: we can believe that such were indeed the principles which the Pharisees professed, but their very austerity and respect for the traditions of the ancients carried them to deplorable excesses. Hence the discrepancy between the picture given by the Jewish historian (we may not forget that Josephus was a Pharisee himself) and the impression we get of the Pharisees from the Gospels.

The juridical science of the Pharisaic Rabbis or Doctors of the Law manifested itself particularly in three points: the observance of the Sabbath, legal purity, and the payment of sacred tithes. The problems raised and the cases of conscience considered had often something of a puerile character. Was it permissible to eat an egg laid or a fruit plucked on a Sabbath day; what kind of water purified best, and how far was it required to plunge one's hands into that water; was it lawful to eat vegetables or fruit bought at the market without being sure that the tax had been paid on those products?

Only through the strictest observance of the written law and the adherence to the interpretations and decisions made by recognized teachers, they felt, could the Jewish nation escape assimilation and extinction. They lived simply, condemned luxury, fasted frequently, washed scrupulously, and were often irritatingly conscious of their virtue; but they represented the moral strength of Judaism, won the middle classes to their support,

and gave their followers a faith and rule that saved them from disintegration when catastrophe struck them. After the destruction of the Temple by the occupying Romans, the Priesthood lost influence, the Sadducees disappeared, the synagogue replaced the temple, and the Pharisees, through the rabbis, became the teachers and shepherds of a scattered but undefeated people.

3 . Three besetting faults

Three main vices marred the very real qualities of the Pharisee: a narrow formalism, unbridled pride, and scorn for the masses.

Under the pretext that tradition was the protecting hedge of the Law, they went so far as to prefer the former when there was conflict between the two. Justly did the Saviour ask them "Why do you transgress the precepts of God for the sake of your tradition?"

Pharisaic pride was painted with telling strokes in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. "I thank thee, God that I am not like the rest of men, who steal and cheat and conimit adultery, or like this publican here." Even God seems to be indebted to the Pharisee who fasts twice a week and contributes regularly to the church collection! In fact he does some works of supererogation but to the neglect of other essential duties.

Scorn for the poor ignorant boors who knew nothing of the Law and its minute observances was the third ugly trait of many a Pharisee. This

was but the natural outcome of the high opinion they entertained of their privileged position, of the lofty ideal of legal justice they proposed and the strict asceticism they paraded.

4. Jesus and the Pharisees

Already John the Baptist called the Pharisees a brood of vipers. In the Gospels the Pharisees watch Jesus closely to find some fault in him; they try to trap him into a wrong answer; they are scandalized at his association with publicans and sinners, at his laxness in the Sabbath observance, and his neglect of ritual ablutions; they object when Jesus is triumphantly acclaimed by his followers; they plot against his life.

Christ often came into contact and even into open conflict with the Pharisees. Perhaps the mildest saying of Jesus concerning the Pharisees is that his disciples must show themselves far better men than the Pharisees if they hope to enter the kingdom of Heaven (Mt 5:20). He called them whited sepulchres, blind leaders, hypocrites who laid intolerable burdens on men's shoulders and themselves would not stir a finger to lift them (Mt 23; Lk 11:37-54).

His denunciations of the Pharisees were certainly not levelled against every member of this sect. There were Pharisees and Pharisees. There was a proverbial satire, which the Talmud had preserved, to the effect that there were seven categories of Pharisees, of whom only the seventh

type belonged to the sect for fear of God and out of love of him.

Christ's relationship with the Pharisees were not confined to his antagonism against them. He had friendly contacts with some of their number, and accepted their invitations to eat with them (Lk 7:36; 14:1). Nicodemus, who approached Jesus at night in search of enlightenment with good faith and humility, was one of the leading Pharisees and a member of the Sanhedrin (Jn 3:1; 7:50). When Herod Antipas, uneasy at Christ's preaching in his territory, thought of doing away with him, it was some of the Pharisees who came to warn him of the danger (Lk 13:31).

It is an almost melodramatic irony that, when Jesus died, his burial was arranged, not by Peter or John, or the other apostles who only the previous night had argued about who loved him the most, but by two members of the Supreme Council of the Jews: the Pharisee Nicodemus, who had reminded his fellow councillors that the Law did not condemn a man unheard, and now contributed a hundred pounds' weight of myrrh and aloes, and Joseph of Arimathea (a Sadducee or more probably a Pharisee), who had had the courage to disagree with his colleagues when they condemned Jesus to death, and now dared to ask Pilate for the body of the Saviour, to entomb it in his own garden.

God's chosen instrument for the propagation of Christianity in the Greek and Roman world, Saul of Tarsus, was, as he himself was not ashamed of confessing, a staunch Pharisee and son of Pharisees

(Acts 23:6-9; Philip 3:5). In the Acts (5:34) we read of Rabbi Gamaliel who came to the defence of Peter and John, and of some Pharisees who embraced the Christian faith (15:5). More than once the hostility between Pharisees and Sadducees brought about an alliance of Pharisees with Christians (Acts 23:6-9).

II. THE SADDUCEES

5. *Two Party Programmes*

When the successors of the Maccabees felt the Greco-Roman world hemming in their little community of the People of God on all sides, they thought that the most prudent course was to maintain relations with it, without at the same time yielding in any point essential to ensure Israel's theocratic constitution. This, however, was not the attitude of the mass of the people, who had provided the great majority of the fighting-men in the war of liberation. It was impossible to defend the faith if one allowed any intercourse with the heathens; a man had to live as a Jew among other Jews, and to cast away as unclean whatever was not Jewish. The true believer had to separate himself from all pagans and from those who were suspected of pagan contamination. These separatists or *Perushim* were the Pharisees. Their opponents, the Sadducees, were for temporizing.

The point at issue was: How is the People of God to be kept free from the paganizing influence of the Hellenistic world? "By prudent diplomacy", replied the Sadducees. "By uncompromising fidelity to the Law and Tradition", countered the Pharisees. According to these orthodox conservatives, the Mosaic Law had to permeate the whole of human life, and the written Law had to be supplemented with the tradition of the elders and the oral interpretation of the scribes. The

Sadducees, however, were for adhering to the essentials of the written Law of Moses; where this was silent, the requirements of the time were to be taken into consideration.

6. *Differences and Enmities*

The Pharisees and Sadducees differed in many respects: social status, religious ideas, and political views. Whilst the Pharisees recruited their rank from the middle class, the Sadducees were the aristocracy of the nation. These were highly-cultivated cosmopolitans, epicurean sceptics, wealthy merchants, land-owners and priests. They controlled the Temple worship and the financial system, and provided the statesmen and diplomats who maintained friendly relations with the occupying authorities.

The High Priest was also the President of the Sanhedrin, the supreme governing body of the Jewish people. Most of its members were Sadducees, though there was also a minority of Pharisees like Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea and Gamaliel. The Sadducees probably took their name from Zadok, who was high priest a thousand years before under King David and anointed Solomon king (1 Kings 1:32-45).

Entrenched in a sort of uncompromising conservatism, they claimed belief in the letter of the Mosaic Law only, rejecting all later dogmatic development which lacked explicit scriptural support. They denied the immortality of the soul

and the resurrection of the body; they did not believe in angels or demons (Mt 22:23; Acts 23:8). They were materialists believing only in the tangible present. It was a team of Sadducees that proposed to Jesus the riddle of the seven brothers who successively, if not successfully, married the same woman. Whose would she be in the next world? The manner in which the question was worded was ironical, contemptuous, perhaps even slightly off-colour (Lk 20:27-40).

Between the Sadducees and the Pharisees lay an abiding hostility. In one point only could they agree: Jesus must be destroyed. But the reasons for their attitudes were different, the Pharisees having a religious ground of attack, the Sadducees mainly fearing that his success might upset the Romans, upon whom their own prosperity depended.

Paul, the prisoner for Christ, himself once a Pharisee, in his trial before the Sanhedrin made use of the doctrinal differences between Pharisees and Sadducees to divert an attack on himself (Acts 23:6-10).

7. Jesus and the Sadducees

The first actual conflict of Jesus with the Sadducees took place when he scourged the money-changers and animal-sellers from the Temple, which was under Sadducee supervision. It was Sadducees, under the high priest Caiphas and the former high priest Annas, who frightened Pilate into crucifying our Lord.

The Sadducees, as well as the Pharisees, who visited John the Baptist in the desert, were addressed by him as a brood of vipers. Both demanded from our Lord a sign from heaven, and Jesus warned his disciples against them. When the Sadducees attempted to embarrass Jesus on the question of the resurrection, they were reduced to ignominious silence by his answer.

The first persecution of the young Church at Jerusalem, related in Acts chapter four, came from the camp of the Sadducees. After the healing by Peter and John of the lame beggar at the temple gate, the apprehensions of the Sadducees were aroused by the fear of popular adhesion to the apostles which would endanger their political power, and by their assertion that Jesus was proved to be the Messiah by his resurrection. The Sadducees were the chief opponents of the apostles throughout the history of the Acts, and there is no instance of any member of this religious group having embraced the Faith.

Yet there were men of noble integrity among the members of this party. We know that, at the time of the great revolt against the Romans, several priests of the Sadducean party let themselves be slaughtered before the altar of sacrifice rather than interrupt their liturgical service, thus sealing with their blood their fidelity to the Law and to the Temple.

After the destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the Sadducean group virtually disappeared, having no institution to hold them together. The views of the Pharisees

thus became dominant in Judaism and have remained so to the present day. If the Sadducees were known as the men of the Temple, the Pharisees are described in the Talmud as "the members of the Synagogue". The Temple is no more; the Synagogue or house of prayer still stands.

III. THE ESSENES

8. *Origin and Membership*

The Essenes, the third major religious sect among the Jews in the two centuries straddling the beginning of the Christian era, have come into the limelight since the discovery these last decades of the Dead Sea Scrolls, that contain not only biblical texts and commentaries but also literature concerning the community of the Qumran monastery, which almost certainly belonged to the Essenian group. These sectarian writings include the revealing *Manual of Discipline*, which describes the life of the Jewish ascetics. Until 1947 the only primary sources from which information concerning the Essenes was derived were the works of the philosopher Philo Judaeus, the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, and the Roman historian Pliny the Elder.

The origin of the Essenes in all probability goes back to the period of the Maccabees. They lived in organized communities under elected superiors and through meditation and self-denial they aspired to grasp the highest mysteries of heaven, believing that they could thus hasten the coming of the Messiah. Hoping by isolation to escape ceremonial defilement, they formed colonies in Judean towns and villages, particularly in the vicinity of Engaddi by the western shores of the Lake of Asphalt, later called the Dead Sea.

Their name meant 'the holy', or perhaps 'the

silent ones'. Admission into the sect was preceded by a three-year probation. On the day of solemn initiation, the novices bound themselves by oath to follow all the rules and to perform all the rites of the sect and to keep secret its books, doctrines and traditions. They renounced marriage and all personal ownership. They promised to obey the superior of the community and to practise loyalty, justice and charity towards all. They were then vested in a white garment, a symbol of light and purity, and they were permitted to partake of meals which assumed the character of an act of worship.

9. Reading the Law and Manual Labour

The Essene's day was divided between work and prayer, reading the Law of Moses and exercising husbandry or some useful industry. Their time table might attract the attention of some of the stricter religious orders today. They kept perfect silence till sunrise, when, after some common morning prayers recited facing the sun, they began their daily tasks which lasted up to the fifth hour—our 11 a.m. They engaged in agriculture, raised cattle, kept bees, and did all types of domestic duties as they kept neither women nor slaves. At 11 they went to the pool to bathe, an act which they regarded as a religious rite. (Plentiful provision for this has been found in the Qumran settlement.) Then, dressed in spotlessly white tunics, they assembled in the refectory, into which no stranger was ever admitted. Some prayers were said, all seated themselves in the prescribed

order, and before each was placed a dish of food, which was eaten in silence. When the frugal meal was completed, they put on their ordinary garments once more and went back to work until sundown. Then came supper at which the procedure was the same as at the morning meal.

In their attachment to the Law, the Essenes surpassed all other Jews. In legal purity they left the most scrupulous Pharisees far behind. They performed ritualistic ablutions whenever they had come in contact with a non-Essene, even with one of their novices. They took part in the worship of the Temple by sending offerings of various kinds but never blood sacrifices of animals, apparently because they thought that the religious practices proper to their own association were the sacrifices that were most pleasing to God. Their observance of the Sabbath was singularly strict. That day was devoted to community reading and explanation of the books of Moses and to the study of the society's secret books. '

It would seem that the Essenes exercised very little influence on the rest of contemporary Judaism, from which they were segregated even physically by the numerous regulations governing their daily lives. Besides those who permanently joined the community, however, there were others who, moved by some vague ascetic longing, followed their mode of life for a time, as Josephus tells us he did in his early youth.

The Essenes were ardent pacifists and refused to make implements of war; but when the legions of Titus attacked Jerusalem and the Temple they

joined other Jews in defending their city and its shrine and fought till most of them were dead. As Josephus describes their constancy we seem almost to enter into the atmosphere of the Acts of the Christian martyrs. After saying that many Essenes lived more than a hundred years because of their simple diet and regular life, he adds:

“Our war with the Romans gave abundant evidence what great souls they had in their trials for although they were tortured and racked, burnt and torn to pieces and went through every torment that they might be forced either to blaspheme their legislator, or to eat what was forbidden them, yet they could not be made to do either of them; but they smiled in their very pains, and laughed those to scorn who tortured them, and gave up their souls with great alacrity as expecting to receive them again” (*Wars, ii, 8*).

The passage is strongly reminiscent of the martyrdom of old Eleazar and of the seven brothers and their mother in the days of the hellenizing campaign of king Antiochus Epiphanes (2 Mac 6-7).

10. Essenism and Christianity

These details supplied by Flavius Josephus, Philo and Pliny the Elder have been confirmed by the now famous manuscripts of Qumran and its monastic establishment. Strange to say, the Essenes are mentioned neither in the Old nor in the New Testament. Some authors, however, claim

that they can discover traces of Essenism in John the Baptist, who, they say, took his baptism of penance from these sectaries. Some even say that John—of whom Saint Luke records that “the child grew and was strengthened in spirit, and was in the wilderness until the day of his manifestation to Israel” (Lk 1:80)—may have been an Essene himself for a time.

How, they ask, could John have been in the wilderness as a child unless under the care of the community of Qumran? Josephus states that the Essenes, with no children of their own, accepted other men’s children and trained them up in their own way of life.

However, as Father Sutcliffe remarks, Saint Luke does not say that John retired to the wilderness as a child. His words do not necessarily mean more than that he went there when of an age to manage for himself. If he was received as a child at Qumran, he may have felt their spirit to be alien to his own religious outlook and have left them before formal admission to their ranks. In any case, living in the same general region, he must have known of the community and must have surely entertained feelings of respect for men of such God-fearing and ascetic lives.

A number of similarities between the teachings and practices found in the Qumran library and in the New Testament raised much speculation some years ago to what extent inspired writers were indebted to the Essenian literature. Sensational theories propounded in the first excitement produced by the discoveries of the Dead Sea

Scrolls are gradually being soft-pedalled or abandoned in presence of the actual evidence. Some have found converts from Qumran in the most unlikely texts, as among the Grecian Jews (Jn 12:20), and the great company of priests mentioned in Acts (6:7). For some Christianity was an Essenism that succeeded. Others have gone so far as almost to find Christianity before Christ. Already a more balanced view is beginning to gain the field. An impartial authority, Theodor Gaster, has said that in the Qumran documents "there is no trace of any of the cardinal theological concepts—Original sin, Incarnation, Redemption and the like—which make Christianity a distinctive faith."

11. Essenism and Kibbutz

In the words of Josephus, no member of the Essenian sect might have a house which was not also the property of all the others; they possessed no land of their own, they lived together and shared the same meals.

Two thousand years later, the new State of Israel has set up an institution—the *kibbutz*—which reminds one of the Essenian community and communalism.

The *kibbutz*, or collective farm (the Hebrew word means 'group'), is one of the most spectacular achievements of the young nation and a source of admiration for tourists. It represents the collective exploitation of a rural estate by a free association

of individuals, characterized by the absolute equality of its members and the abolition of salaried labour and private ownership. Constituted as a co-operative society on the principle of "each according to his capabilities, each according to his needs", the function of the *kibbutz* is to organize the community life of its members, to supply to their material and cultural needs, and to protect their interests. Each unit has a membership of from 300 to 1,700, the total amounting to about 100,000 members.

An obvious difference between the Essenian community and the state-promoted *kibbutz* is that whilst the monks' primary preoccupation was religious and ascetical, the motive behind this successful experiment of rural co-operatives in the land that flowed once with milk and honey is essentially of the social and economic order.

The Publicans

I. THE PUBLICANS AND THE PUBLIC

1. The Pharisee and the Publican

Year in year out, on a certain Sunday after Pentecost, we might expect to hear an homily on the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. Our Lord could hardly have chosen two characters more suited to the purpose he had in relating this parable to "some who had confidence in themselves, thinking they had won acceptance with God, and despised the rest of the world" (Lk 18:9).

The Pharisee depicted here was faithful in observing every point of the Law and even practised works of supererogation, but he vaunted his goodness and adopted the holier-than-thou attitude. The Publican was a sinful man, but humbly admitted his sinfulness and begged for

God's mercy. (It is in imitation of this penitent sinner that we beat our breast when we pray for pardon.) Externally the Pharisee and the Publican were by occupation and conduct as far apart as they could be: the former being a model of righteousness according to the Law; the latter, the prototype of fraudulent exploitation, ruthless extortion, dishonesty and injustice.

2. Publicans unpopular with the Public

Who were these Publicans? They were collectors of the *Publicum*, the Roman taxes and customs. The Romans had spared the Jews the payment of the tax of blood, when they dispensed them from military service, but the taxes which the Jews had to pay in money and in kind were exceedingly heavy.

In place of appointing revenue officers to raise fixed taxes from the community, the Romans and their deputy princes like the Herods were accustomed to put up to auction the privilege of farming the public revenues. Those who bid at the auction were necessarily wealthy men or representatives of wealthy companies, for they undertook to pay a stipulated sum into the treasury and had to give security to the government. How the amount was to be obtained was not specified; this was left to the ingenuity (and conscience, where existing) of the individual contractor. These could sell their right to subcontractors, who often engaged a number of subordinate agents, mostly from among their kith and kin, to do the actual work of collecting the taxes. The higher officials

were generally Romans of equestrian rank, whom Cicero called "the flower of the Roman knighthood, the ornament of the state, the backbone of the nation", but their subordinates were of inferior rank and dignity.

It was understood that the contractors and the actual tax-collectors were to reimburse themselves for their labour and the risk they had incurred, by taking from the tax-payers a fraction more than they paid over to the public treasury. Since the tariffs were often vaguely defined or insufficiently publicized, and recourse against arbitrary impositions practically non-existent, the employees of the revenue department were tempted to line their pockets by committing every sort of dishonesty. With a few honourable exceptions, the publicans, great and small, were extortioners, and therefore unpopular among all classes in the provinces. In the conquered countries the revenue agents belonged in most cases to the native population.

The Jews loathed these collectors because of their collaboration with the hated Romans and because of their abuse of their office by endless vexations and petty tyranny, from which there was neither defence nor appeal. In the Gospels they are linked with heathens, with harlots, with sinners. They were ostracized from decent society, in fact it was considered disreputable to be their friend or to associate with these "untouchables".

3. *Anything to declare*

The Talmud distinguishes two classes of

publicans: the tax-officer or *Gabbai*, and the customs-officer or *Mokhsa*. Both fell under the Rabbinic ban, but the second category (to which Matthew belonged) were the object of chief execration. Saint Paul writing to the Romans (13:7) refers to this double kind of taxation when he says: "Pay every man his due: taxes, if it be taxes, customs, if it be customs".

The *Gabbai* collected the regular dues. The ground-tax amounted to one-tenth of all grain and one-fifth of the wine and fruit harvested. The income-tax amounted to one per cent. The poll-tax was levied on all persons from the age of fourteen to that of sixty.

If this offered many opportunities for unjust oppression, the *Mokhsas* could inflict much greater hardships upon the poor people. There was import and export duty, purchase and sale tax, toll on bridges and high roads.

The classical reader knows the ingenuity which could invent a tax, and find a name for every kind of exaction; such as on axles, wheels, and pack-animals, on admission to towns and markets, ships and quays, on crossing rivers and dams. The most unpleasant feature of the system was the annoyance of being constantly stopped on a journey, having to unload one's ass or camel when every bale and package was opened and the contents tumbled about, private letters opened, the *Mokhsas* the while ruling supreme in their insolence and rapacity. Today's international travellers may be grateful for small mercies, when they are subjected to a mere token inspection of

their baggage by benevolent and polite customs officers.

4. *Christ and the Publicans*

John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, seemed to know where the publican shoe pinched. "The publicans, *too*," tells us Saint Luke, "came to be baptized" (Lk 3:12). And, as Saint Augustin says, John, as an experienced physician, applied to them the proper remedy: "He told them: Do not go beyond the scale appointed to you." In the same strain might a preacher tell a congregation of taxi-drivers today: "Do not overcharge your fares, taking unfair advantage of foreigners unfamiliar with the city and Indian currency."

One of the charges levelled against our Lord by the Scribes was that he ate with publicans and sinners and was their friend. He did agree with the popular opinion as to the low moral state of the average publican: "If you love those who love you, what title have you to a reward? Will not the publicans do as much?" (Mt 5:46). Still he invited them as freely as he did others into the Kingdom of God. His kindness touched their hearts, and not a few of them repented and believed in him. He did them honour by introducing the penitent publican into his parable of the Pharisee and the Publican.

His winning ways with Matthew and Zaccheus, two highly placed officials of the revenue department, deserve separate treatment.

II. TWO GOOD PUBLICANS

5. Zaccheus adds inches to his stature

This is the delightfully vivid story of the chief district tax-officer of Jericho who, throwing dignity to the wind, climbed a sycamore tree by the dusty road, as any school boy might, to get a better view of the prophet from Nazareth (Lk 19:1-10).

Some of our readers may have seen the clusters of human fruit that hung from trees (and lamp-posts) lining the route from the Santa Cruz airport to the Oval grounds, when the Holy Father came to Bombay for the Eucharistic Congress in 1964. It is then quite likely that Zaccheus was not the only one on that lookout of his. But he was the only one honoured by a special glance from Jesus. That glance converted the publican into a true child of Abraham. How startled Zaccheus must have been to hear Jesus address him as an old acquaintance: "Zaccheus, make haste and come down for I must stay at your house today (Lk 19:5). So the four-footer tax-collector nimbly dropped from his perch and began to play host to the Master.

Zaccheus had been the recipient of a favour unique in kind. Jesus accepted invitations, but he was not in the habit of inviting himself to the homes of those he had never met. The attitude of the crowd to this choice of lodging was not favourable either to Jesus or to his host: "He has gone to lodge with one who is a sinner."

That invitation was going to prove a costly affair for the good Zaccheus! Touched by God's grace, the sinner decided to make his confession and restitution for all his fleecing and extortions. "But Zaccheus stood upright" (every inch of him, Saint Luke seems to tell us) "and said to the Lord: Here and now, Lord, I give half of what I have to the poor; and if I have wronged anyone in any way; I make restitution of it fourfold." This last must have made a considerable inroad on the half of his fortune he was keeping for himself. With what joy he must have heard the word of absolution: "This day is salvation (such is the meaning of the name of Jesus) come to this house; because thou also art a son of Abraham."

What became of Zaccheus later? This converted publican has always been dear to Christian piety. An uncertain tradition makes him Saint Peter's companion, later bishop of Caesarea, and finally missionary to far-away Gaul. The legend, however, has not passed the Bollandist sieve. There is no need for us to improve upon the biblical account, in which he is canonized during his lifetime by him whose word cannot be mistaken

6. From Customs Officer to Apostle and Evangelist

Besides the four great apostles—Peter and Andrew, James and John—Saint Matthew is the only one whose call to the apostolate is reported in the Gospel (Mt 9:9-13). Matthew (or Levi as he was called at first) was a publican having his office or custom-house at Capernaum, the important Roman military garrison by the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus seems to have had a way with tax-collectors. Just as in the case of Zaccheus, he required no introduction here. The brusqueness of the summons, with no explanation appended, is particularly striking. "Come, follow me." And Matthew's immediate and unquestioning response is equally remarkable, if not disconcerting. Wasn't that an ill-considered action? Do we follow a perfect stranger who comes our way and just tells us, come along, as any kidnapper might do? This was the accusation laid at Matthew's door by Porphyry and Julian the Apostate. But, as Saint Jerome aptly remarked, Jesus was not unknown at Capernaum, where he had wrought several miracles and which he had made so continuously his headquarters that the evangelists call it his own town. Besides, as the holy doctor points out, we must take into account the aura of majesty and sanctity which surrounded our Lord, attracting and gently winning to him souls of good will.

Commentators note that Matthew's decision was more meritorious than that of Peter and Andrew and the other fishermen. These, after all, had not burned their boats; at any moment they could go back to their nets and start earning their living again, as they actually did even after our Lord's resurrection. But in the case of Matthew, who left his counter with the accounts and registers without giving a month's notice, his vacancy was immediately filled. Should he fail in his new vocation, the former publican's prospects of further employment were poor indeed. Matthew was no doubt taking a risk, but a calculated risk, the risk of believing.

The new recruit thought that the event was worth celebrating. In honour of his Master he gave a big dinner, which he intended to be also a farewell banquet to his friends and former colleagues. More than one candidate to the priesthood has, on hearing the Master's voice, given a farewell party for his friends and former schoolmates on the eve of his departure for the seminary.

Jesus had brought his own contingent of disciples, and Matthew had invited those "publicans and sinners" who were his friends. We meet these two terms together often in the Gospel, but in such a context the term 'sinner' is not to be taken in our usual sense, but as denoting those who, from the standpoint of current Jewish morality, were legally unclean. No wonder that the Scribes and Pharisees, highly scandalized, approached the disciples of Jesus to voice their shock and surprise at seeing their Master eating with publicans and sinners. Where was his self-respect? Jesus intervened, using the very weapons they had put into his hands: "It is not those who are in health that have need of the physician, it is those who are sick. I have come to call sinners, not the just."

Maisie Ward in *They Saw His Glory* writes that a Jewish heckler once asked at Hyde Park how she thought the other Apostles received Matthew—surely his company would be hateful to them. One thing we know that when later on the evangelists were writing the story, all, save Matthew himself, tried to conceal the profession

that had been his shame. No other Gospel but his identifies Levi the Publican with Matthew the apostle who wrote the Gospel most quoted in the early Church, the one first written and long held to be the most important.



Sinners

I. IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. Jesus All for Sinners

Any reader of the Gospel is struck by the attitude of Jesus towards sinners. He seemed to have a soft heart for them. Scandalous, is how the learned and respectable from among the Jews—the Scribes and Pharisees—qualified his behaviour in this regard. “When they found all the publicans and sinners coming to listen to him the Pharisees and the Scribes were indignant. Here is a man, they said, that entertains sinners, and eats with them” (Lk 15:1-2).

Here we have the person of our Lord flanked on one side by the Scribes-and-Pharisees (the personification of legal knowledge and self-righteousness), and on the other by the Publicans-

and-Sinners (the very symbol of hateful dishonesty and ritual ignorance and defilement).

2. *New Testament Sinners*

Who are the *sinners* often referred to in the Gospel?

a) The term *hamartolos* designates the man who lives in conscious and deliberate opposition to God, either by living an immoral life or by following a dishonest or disreputable occupation, and therefore is avoided, not only by the Pharisees, but also by the ordinary people. Thus the Pharisees showed their strong disapproval of our Lord's conduct, when they queried his disciples, "How comes it that your master eats with publicans and sinners?" (Mt 9:11). And the Pharisee who was a host to Jesus was wondering how his distinguished guest consented that the sinful woman should wash his feet with her tears, dry them with her hair, kiss and anoint them. Didn't this prophet know what sort of woman that was, a sinner? (Lk 7:39).

It was not the scrupulous and meticulous Pharisees only but even the common folk that thought they had to cut off every bond of social intercourse with sinners. Addressing an ordinary crowd of Jews, Jesus reproved them for having found fault at first with John the Baptist, who came as an ascetic to invite them to repentance, and then they disapproved of himself, who came to their aid leading a normal life. "When the Son

of Man came, he ate and drank with you, and of him you say, Here is a glutton; he loves wine; he is a friend of publicans and sinners" (Lk 7:34).

b) A second and further meaning of the word *sinner* in the Gospels designates the man, who, in the eyes of the Pharisees, does not follow the Pharisaic interpretation of the Law; and in this sense it was applied by the Pharisees to Jesus himself, both on account of his social relations with sinful people, and on account of his rejection of the Pharisees' interpretation of the Torah.

He was accused of neglecting legal prescriptions by sitting down to eat with hands unwashed; by allowing his disciples to pluck ears of corn on a sabbath day; by giving sight to the blind man on the sabbath. "How can a man do miracles like this, and be a sinner? This man, to our knowledge, is a sinner." "Sinner or not", rejoined the man who had been blind, "I cannot tell. We know for certain that God does not answer the prayers of sinners" (Jn 9:16, 24, 31).

c) In keeping with the ordinary language of Judaism, the word *sinners* in the New Testament may mean the pagan unredeemed mankind. After the agony in the garden, Jesus warned his apostles that the Son of Man was going to be betrayed into the hands of sinners (Mt 26:45). By the word *sinners* the apostles understood the pagans or the hirelings of the Romans, though Jesus meant also the Scribes and Pharisees.

Saint Paul, emphasizing the special privileges of Israel as a race possessing a rule of conduct

vastly superior to anything found among Gentile nations, whom therefore they referred to as sinners, wrote perhaps with a slight touch of irony: "We are Jews by right of nature, we do not come from the guilty stock of the Gentiles" (Gal 2:15).

To stress the certainty of our hope of final salvation through Christ, the Apostle reminds us of his love for us even before we were reconciled to him: "As if God meant to prove how well he loves us, it was while we were still sinners that Christ, in his own appointed time, died for us" (Rom 5:8).

3 . *Exhortation to Repentance*

In the New Testament the preaching of repentance (the Greek *metanoia*) means a complete change of heart, a conversion in depth) was inaugurated by John the Baptist. In fact a change of heart was the theme of his message.

Jesus also began his ministry with a call to repentance. For all his consideration and love for publicans and sinners, he always insisted on conversion and sinning no more. This change from sin to a better course of life always embraced a recognition of sin, sincere regret and an amendment of one's ways, the effects of which are good deeds.

The oldest apostolic teaching remained true to the Master's doctrine. To the question of the impressed audience, "What are we to do?", after

his sermon on the first Christian Pentecost, Peter replied that they should repent and be baptized every one of them, in the name of Jesus Christ, to have their sins forgiven (Acts 2:37). Without repentance no forgiveness of sin is possible.

Such was the doctrine on repentance proposed by the first pope, and such has remained throughout the centuries. Pope Pául VI insisted on the same fundamental principles from Scripture in his Apostolic Constitution of February 17, 1966, by which he expounded the 'theology of penance' and established the revised penitential discipline in the post-conciliar Church. The opening words of the papal document are, *Poenitemini et credite evangelio*, "Repent, and believe the gospel" (Mk 1:15).

II. THE GOSPEL OF MERCY

4. "*Secundum Lucam*"

Commentators have often remarked that Saint Luke, "the beloved physician" (Col 4:14), more than any other evangelist, delights in portraying Jesus as the Supreme Healer, both of bodies and souls. He is the only one who has our Lord's fellow-townsmen call him "physician" by way of challenge (4:23), and shortly afterwards, as if in answer to that challenge, he relates that "power went forth from him and healed all" (6:19).

Then from the spiritual point of view Luke pictures Jesus as the compassionate healer of ailing humanity, the tender comforter of the afflicted, the sympathetic friend of all those who have gone astray. Hence it is with the most complete historical appropriateness that Dante Alighieri describes Saint Luke, without naming him, as "the Chronicler of the Meekness of Christ" — "*Scriba mansuetudinis Christi (De Monarchia I, 16)*."

Saint Luke's "Gospel of Mercy and Universal Salvation" has also been called the "Gospel of the Great Pardons": the pardon of the sinful woman, of Jesus' executioners, of the good thief. He tells us the story of the change wrought in the hearts of two publicans, Levi and Zaccheus. He has recorded the great parables of God's mercy towards sinners, under the guise of the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son.

According to Monsignor Ronald Knox, "It is fairly certain that the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Prodigal Son were representative, not only in our Lord's mind but in that of his audience, of those Gentiles who were beyond the pale of Judaism, but were to find a home in the Christian Church."

A touching instance, in which justice is sublimated by mercy, is the pardon granted by Jesus to the woman who had been taken in the act of adultery and dragged by the Scribes and Pharisees before Jesus, whilst he was teaching in the temple precincts. This episode is to be found at the beginning of the eighth chapter of Saint John's Gospel, but is burdened with the question of how it got there and came down to us. Scholars are agreed that the passage is canonical and part of the Scriptures, but whether it was written by Saint John or by some other *inspired* writer remains an unsolved problem. Some have suggested that it is an isolated little note penned by Luke. The character of the episode, so full of infinite compassion, would favour this conjecture. The scholars of the *Jerusalem Bible*, both French and English, believe that the literary relationship between this passage and the two closing verses of chapter twenty-one of Luke is unmistakable and that it would find here a most natural context.

5. *The Repentant Sinner*

Saint Luke is the only evangelist to tell us the story of the sinful woman who anointed the feet of

Christ, and had her sins forgiven (7:36-50), though all the three other evangelists narrate the anointing of Jesus by a woman in similar circumstances.

The third Gospel, with delicate reserve, does not give the name of the sinful woman. A widespread opinion of the faithful in the Latin Church, reflected in the liturgical texts of the feast of Saint Mary Magdalene on July 22, has generally identified the anonymous sinner with Mary of Magdala and often also at the same time with Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus and Martha. But the Greek Fathers and the whole Eastern tradition favour distinction between the three women, and this is more in harmony with the Gospel data.

The question of "the three Marys" (although we know the names of only two of the women concerned) has exercised the minds of many scholars from the first centuries of Christianity. Some have held that they were three distinct women; others say that they were two women, Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany being one and the same person, but distinct from the anonymous sinner; others finally maintain that the three different appellations refer to one and only woman.

Most modern Catholic exegetes adopt the view that most probably the Gospel refers in this connection to three different women. One is the unnamed sinner who entered the banquet room in the house of Simon the Pharisee, in a Galilean town (Lk 7:6-50). Another is Mary of Magdala, out of whom Jesus had cast seven devils (Lk 8:2); she became one of our Lord's most devoted disciples, stood by His cross on Calvary, visited

the tomb to anoint His body and was the first to see Him risen. The third is Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, of a quiet, contemplative temperament, who listened with rapt attention to the words of the Master (Lk 10:39-42), and anointed Jesus at a banquet in the house of Simon the leper at Bethany (Mt 25:6-13).

It was probably Saint Gregory the Great that gave the lead in the Western Church to the opinion that identified these three different women. The view became widespread through pious legends, popular devotion, artists and poets.

Two main reasons may be given for this popular identification. First, the anointing in Bethany was not distinguished from the anointing in Galilee, whilst the two Simons (the Pharisee and the Leper) were taken to be one. Secondly, the earlier diabolical possession of Mary Magdalene was assumed to mean that she had once been a sinful woman and therefore the same as the unnamed penitent woman who anointed Jesus in Galilee.

While there is nothing psychologically impossible in the idea of a woman who was once a sinner becoming both a quiet contemplative, such as Mary of Bethany was, and an impetuous lover of Jesus, such as Mary Magdalene was, there is really no textual basis for amalgamating them into such a complex individual. On the other hand, Saint John clearly distinguishes Mary of Bethany from Mary Magdalene, and Saint Luke likewise keeps the unnamed penitent of Galilee distinct from both the Marys.

The Zealots and the Herodians

The Zealots and the Herodians were more political parties than religious sects. They often, however, leagued with religious groups for their own purposes.

1. The Zealots

The Zealots (meaning enthusiasts or firebrands) formed a patriotic movement which seems to have originated, under the leadership of the Galilean Judas of Gamala, in the revolt against the census taken under Quirinius, the governor of Syria. Their aim was resistance to Roman aggression, and non-violence was certainly not part of their programme.

They were what may be called the militant wing of Pharisaism; they were an extreme left

party that had dissociated itself from the Pharisees to carry on the struggle for national independence, but represented the same religious tendencies.

Their belief in the messianism of the Old Testament was entirely limited to the recovery of Jewish independence. They believed in the worship of Yahweh alone, and were convinced that acceptance of foreign domination and payment of taxes to a foreign ruler was a blasphemy against Yahweh.

The increasing fanaticism of this minority was not to the taste of most other Jews, and contributed to provoke the Judeo-Roman war. Ultimately the party degenerated into a body of assassins who, with their short dagger called *sica*, struck not only occupying Romans but also those from among the Jews whom they counted as conciliatory or treacherous.

Their largest concerted effort before the outbreak of the Jewish war was a raid of reprisal on Samaria for an assault on Jewish pilgrims under the procurator Ventidius Cumanus (48-52). Saint Paul only barely escaped the emissaries of these gangsters, who had plotted to kill him on his intended voyage from Corinth to Syria (Acts 23:12-15). The terrorists continued working up the passions of the Jewish people and provoked those revolts that ended in the catastrophe of A.D. 70. Josephus calls them *sicarii* or "stabbers" and remarks that they themselves liked to be called Zealots "as if they were zealous in laudable undertakings and were not rather zealous in the most abominable deeds and extravagant in them beyond the example of others."

The last centre of resistance was the rock fortress of Masada near the Dead Sea, fortified and beautified by Herod the Great and immortalized by its 960 defenders led by Zealots, who preferred death at their own hands than enslavement by the Roman army in the year 73. Pockets of resistance still remained, and the Zealot movement survived long enough to break again, under the leadership of Simon Bar Koshba who claimed to be the Messiah, in the year 132 under the reign of Hadrian. This struggle to death between Jews and Romans was the last thrust of a nation that refused to disappear, and resulted in frightful massacres and deportations.

A connection between the Zealots and the Qumran sect has been sought by some scholars. Most authorities, however, believe that the monks of the Khirbet Qumran establishment were Essenes.

The epithet "Zealot" is given by Saint Luke (Lk 6:15; Acts 1:13) to the apostle Simon the Cananean, to distinguish him from Simon Peter, and may indicate either the apostle's burning zeal, or possibly (some have surmised) his membership at some time in this branch of the Pharisees, which was most rigorous in the application of the national theocratic principles.

Barring this possible reference, the Zealots or *sicarii*, of whom Josephus often speaks, are never mentioned in the Gospels. It is possible, however, that the Galileans mentioned by Saint Luke as having been slaughtered by Pilate were Zealots (Lk 13:1). Saint Paul seems to have known a great

deal about their intrigues, for he refers to them in his farewell speech at Miletus (Acts 20:19).

2. The Herodians

The Herodians represented a political tendency diametrically opposed to that of the Zealots. They appear twice in the Gospel among the enemies of Christ (Mk 3:6; 12:15; Mt 22:16). Actually the Gospel seems to be our only contemporary source of information about them. After Jesus had cured a man's withered hand, they conspired with the Pharisees to destroy him. On another occasion, along with the disciples of the Pharisees, they approached our Lord, asking whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Caesar.

Who were the Herodians? Many, with St Jerome, thought that they were Herod's soldiers, or Jews who collected taxes on behalf of Herod. Others took them to be officials of the court of Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee. The more probable opinion today is that they were partisans of the Herodian dynasty, who dreamed of a return of national unity under a prince of that family, and a consequent liberation from the foreign yoke. They were more interested in politics than in religion, but were not unwilling to join the Pharisees in a temporary alliance, the more surely to do away with their common enemy. For the Scribes the support of the Herodians was a guaranty of impunity.

Both the Pharisees and the Herodians made the best of the political situation created by the Roman

occupation, and the remark of the Sanhedrists with regard to the Carpenter-of-Nazareth-turned-demagogue must express a feeling common to the members of both parties: "If we leave him to his own devices, he will find credit everywhere; then the Romans will come, and make an end of our city and our race" (Jn 11:48).

The young royalists despatched by the Pharisees to trap Jesus in the moot question of paying the tribute to the Romans, began their cross-questioning courteously enough—even with subtle flattery. Then came the shot from the ambush. It was meant to be fatal whichever way the Lord would answer. If he said tribute should be paid, he was an accomplice of the national enemy and a traitor. If he said tribute should not be paid, he would be denounced to the Roman procurator as a rebel.

Only twenty years earlier, Judas of Galilee, the founder of the extreme nationalists, declared that the conquerors should not be recognized and tribute should be refused them. The revolt incited by him on the occasion of an enrolment ordered by the Roman government, which the nationalists considered tantamount to enslavement, is referred to in the Acts of the Apostles (5:37). The uprising was quelled, not without force, by the Romans, but its remote consequences were extremely serious. In the days of the public life of Jesus, the whole subject of tribute to the foreign rulers was still one bristling with dangers.



Nazirites and Proselytes

1. Vows: temporary and perpetual

The Hebrew root *nzr* seems to have the basic meaning of “singling out from common or profane use”; hence a *nazir* or *nazirite* or *nazarite* is a person consecrated to God.

In Israel any person, man or woman, could consecrate himself or herself to God for a limited period; this was done by taking the vow of a Nazirite, the detailed rules for which are given in the book of Numbers (6: 1-21). The features emphasized for the period of consecration referred to the abstention from wine and all fermented drinks, to the allowing one's hair to grow freely, and to the avoidance of all contact with a dead body which would render one ceremonially unclean.

At the expiration of the term of the vow, the

nazirite offered various sacrifices, had his dedicated hair shaved and burned in the fire of the sanctuary, and was once more allowed to drink wine. He was now "desecrated" and could return to normal life.

The custom for Jews to make these vows was apparently not uncommon in the Greco-Roman period (cfr. 1 Mac 3:49; Josephus, War, ii, 15), and, as we shall see presently, among the early Jewish Christians.

Such persons were called "Nazirites of days" or of temporary vows, the shortest period being of thirty days. There were, besides, "perpetual nazirites", who from infancy were consecrated for life.

Samson, Samuel and John the Baptist were perpetual nazirites. The story of Samson speaks of a life-long consecration, which resulted from a divine call. Even before he was born, his mother had to abstain from wine, because the child she was to bear would be "a nazir of God from his mother's womb to the day of his death" (Judg 13:4-5, 7, 13-14). No razor was to pass over Samson's head: his long hair was to be the visible sign of his consecration and the source of his miraculous strength. If the seven locks of his hair were cut off, he would be as weak as any other man (Judg 16:17). Samuel was similarly consecrated to God by his mother for the whole of his life, a nazirite unshorn (1 Sam 1:11).

In the New Testament the nazirite practice continued. From St Luke's Gospel (1:15) we can

infer that John the Baptist was consecrated a perpetual nazirite. It is not unlikely that the prophetess Anna, that aged widow "who abode continually in the temple night and day, serving God with fasting and prayer" (Lk 2:37), was a nazirite.

In all probability, a mitigated form of this vow was taken by St Paul during his third missionary journey (Acts 18:18). At Jerusalem five years later, he accompanied four other Judeo-Christians, who had completed their term of nazirite vows, in the ceremony prescribed by the law, and himself took care of the expenses incurred by their sacrifices in the temple (Acts 21:23-26).

Even Queen Bernice, whom Paul met later (Acts 25:13), had come to Jerusalem—as Josephus relates—"to fulfil a vow to God, since there is the custom that those afflicted by some illness or other trial take a vow, thirty days before the day on which they are to offer sacrifices, to abstain during this time from wine and to shave their hair" (*War of the Jews*, ii, 15).

2. *Convert-making among the Jews*

The religion of the Old Testament with its belief in one supreme God who must be recognized and served by all mankind, has in itself universalistic tendencies.

At the time of Christ, the Jews, both in Palestine and in the Diaspora, were zealous in making

converts to their faith. These were called *proselytes* (those who approach, or newcomers), a Greek word which in general signified a person who changed from one opinion or party to another, and in the New Testament a convert from paganism to Judaism.

The Pharisees, in particular, went to great lengths in order to secure even one single adherent. Such ill-directed efforts were severely denounced by Jesus. Not content with obstructing the entrance to the Kingdom, the Scribes and Pharisees sought with immense zeal to draw ignorant pagans down to their own level and to make them consciously sin against the proffered light of the Messiah (Mt 23:15; Lk 11:52).

The Roman poet Horace mentions the proselytizing spirit as a characteristic trait of the Jews, who in his time were numerous in Rome. At the close of one of his satires, he playfully suggests that spending one's leisure in scribbling verse is one of the more pardonable vices, chiefly at a time when verse writing had become so common an amusement of cultivated Romans. Should the reader disagree, the army of poets, who were the large majority, were sure to come and, like Jews, to force him to pass over to their ranks—*ac veluti te Judaei cogemus in hanc concedere turmam* (Sat. i, 4, 142-143).

This itch for proselytizing utterly baffled the Romans, since they were liberal in admitting foreign gods into their pantheon, and countenanced every kind of religious belief, provided it was not accompanied by secrecy.

3. *Converts: I and II Class*

The rabbis recognized two categories of proselytes: Proselytes of Righteousness or of the Covenant and Proselytes of the Gate.

The first class were those who accepted Judaism in its entirety by submitting to the rites of initiation which included circumcision, a ritual bath, and the offering of a sacrificial victim. These undertook the obligation of observing the Mosaic Law in all points, and enjoyed the same privileges as the Israelites, except for the right of calling themselves the children of Abraham.

Proselytes of this class were among those present at the first Christian Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2:11). Nicholas of Antioch, one of the first seven deacons ordained by the Twelve, is singled out as a proselyte (Acts 6:5); this implies that the other six were Jews by birth. From the fact that he had built a synagogue for the Jews, it has been concluded that the Roman centurion of Capernaum had embraced Judaism (Lk 7:4). The Herodian family were Idumean proselytes, possibly from the time in which John Hircanus forcibly imposed circumcision upon the Idumeans.

The "Proselytes of the Gate", who were much more numerous, were so called because, although they were allowed to visit the Temple of Jerusalem, they might not go beyond the Court of the Gentiles. They did not submit to circumcision and were dispensed from the ceremonial laws, but accepted the Jewish teaching on God and morality.

They were bound to observe the so-called seven commandments of Noah; namely, to abstain from blasphemy, idolatry, murder, incest, robbery, rebellion, and the eating of blood or bloody meat. They attended the synagogue, accepted the sacred books and observed the Sabbath as the Jews.

Such "good pagans" as were well disposed towards Judaism were often designated as "God-fearing men" and "worshippers". Among these half-converts and sympathizers the New Testament knows the Gentiles who approached Philip for an interview with Jesus (Jn 12:20); the centurion Cornelius of Joppa with all his household (Acts 10:2, 22); the Ethiopian eunuch who was reading Isaiah (Acts 8:27-39); Lydia the purple-seller with all her household (Acts 16:14). Some think that Pilate's wife, Claudia Procula, may have been a convert to Judaism. Many of Paul's first converts, if not most of them, came from "the fearers of God" who heard him in the synagogues. The term is applied to "such women of fashion as worshipped the true God", through whose influence the Jews of Antioch of Pisidia set on foot a persecution against Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:50).

Most of these half-way converts to Judaism seem to have received Christianity kindly. These good people, who had been dissatisfied with paganism and had become admirers and partial adherents of Judaism, not only welcomed Christianity as something better than Judaism, but they formed the core of most of the early Christian communities outside of Palestine, with only a sprinkling of outright Jews or outright pagans.

This fact, added to other factors which favoured exclusivism, brought the Jewish community as a whole into opposition to proselytism by the end of the first century. Roman law dealt an additional blow to proselytism when Hadrian prohibited circumcision about A.D. 132. This may have been one of the reasons for the final Jewish insurrection in that year. Hadrian's successor, Antoninus Pius, excepted Jews from this law, but the circumcision of proselytes remained prohibited.

The Gentiles

I. THE CHANGING PATTERN

1. God's People and the Nations

The Jews rightly considered themselves to be God's chosen people (*ho laos*). The non-Israelite world, the rest of the world, was for the Jews, "the nations" (*ta ethne* in Greek, *gentes* in Latin). For a Jew the geographical, religious and political division of the entire world was a simple affair. There were only two possible categories of human beings: Jews and non-Jews; only two sides in the competition: Israel *versus* "The Rest".

A parallel may be found in the habit of the Greeks calling all those who did not share their language and civilization 'barbarians' (*barbaroi*, those who spoke gibberish or broken Greek). Even Saint Luke refers to the natives of the island

of Malta, who spoke Phoenician and treated St Paul and the other shipwrecked passengers with uncommon kindness, as *barbaroi* (Acts 28:2).

Israel's religion was so lofty that it stood in strong and favourable contrast to the Gentile religions; strict laws were enacted to prevent the corruption of manners and of the true monotheistic belief in spite of their contact with idolatrous peoples. This led the Jews, however unreasonably, to feel contempt for all non-Jews.

This ring of contempt could generally be detected in the Hebrew word *goyim*, as well as in the corresponding Greek and Latin equivalents for "nations" (*ethne* and *gentes*).

In early Christian times *gentes* or *gentiles* designated those who were neither Jews nor Christians (Christians having inherited the title of "God's people"). Later the Latin word *pagani*, literally those living in a *pagus* or country village, was used as equivalent to *gentiles*. The genuinely Anglo-Saxon equivalent of "pagans" is the word "heathens", originally those living on the "heaths", or in the country: The origin of these terms is due to the fact that early Christianity was mostly limited to large centres of population.

In 112, Governor Pliny, writing from Bithynia, informed Emperor Trajan that "the contagious superstition" of Christianity was "not confined to cities any longer but had spread through the villages and the countryside" ("*Neque enim civitates tantum, sed vicos etiam atque agros superstitionis istius contagio pervagata est.* — *Epist X, 96*).

2. *From Exclusivism to Universalism*

Christ, the Son of God, came into the world to save all men, all nations and all races. Old Simeon's prophetic eye was perfectly in focus, when he foretold that the Child he held in his arms was to be the Light which should give revelation to the *Gentiles*, and be the glory of *God's people*, Israel.

Though this was the ultimate and all-comprehensive goal of our Lord's mission, His plan was to limit His Gospel at first to the Jews. Later His message would be addressed to the whole pagan world as well. His first explicit direction to the Apostles was to avoid the pagans: "Do not go into the walks of the Gentiles, go rather to the lost sheep that belong to the house of Israel" (Mt 10:5-6).

Despite this first mandate to the Apostles, our Blessed Lord had Himself several important contacts with pagans; He even worked miracles on their behalf. One of these contacts of Christ with the Gentile world, or what would later be called the foreign missions, was through a Roman centurion; another was his meeting with a Canaanite woman.

3. *The Roman Sergeant*

The military officer of the Roman garrison stationed at Capernaum had been in the country long enough to know that there was a strong wall of separation between Jew and Gentile. This explains his reluctance to approach Jesus person-

ally on behalf of his sick servant or orderly. So he sent some of the Jewish elders to present his case. The delegates acquitted themselves of their task with zealous concern and added a strong recommendation of their own. "He deserves to have this done to him; he is a good friend to our race, and has built our synagogue for us at his own cost" (Lk 7:4-5). Similar cases occurred in pre-independence India, when British officials became popular among the local population by their kindness and good services.

The words expressing the centurion's feeling of unworthiness have had the singular honour of being repeated many times over at Mass before Holy Communion throughout the centuries.

This pagan sergeant's faith elicited the greatest encomium from our Lord's lips: He had not seen such strong faith even among the chosen people of Israel. "And this I tell you, that there are many who will come from the east and from the west, and will take their places in the kingdom of God with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, while that kingdom's own sons are cast into the darkness without, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mt 8:11-12).

The Jews loved to picture the reign of the Messiah as a lavish feast set out for the children of Israel, which the pagans would watch from a distance, consumed with envy, shame and rage. Sweet revenge for the years of oppression under pagan rulers! Now Jesus reverses the roles: Gentiles of good will are invited to the celestial banquet, and the children of Israel are excluded through their own fault.

4. *The Phoenician Woman*

The Canaanite woman of Syro-Phoenician descent was from the district of Tyre and Sidon, near the modern Beirut. Saint Mark (7:26) calls her also *Hellenis* or Greek, an appellation which here stands for non-Jewish or pagan by religion.

It was no easy matter for this woman from outside the Jewish fold to wrest a miracle from the Master, whom she acknowledged as Son of David. Jesus put her faith to the test with a seemingly harsh remark: "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." Her quick retort was as witty as it was pertinent. She understood that if in the allegory the children of the house or Jews had to be served first, the dogs and puppies, such as the Canaanites and other pagans, had a chance of being fed with scraps and leftovers. Her faith won the day, and her daughter was healed.

II. MAGI, GREEKS, ROMANS

5. *Pagans at the Crib*

Our Saviour did not use the contacts He had with the Roman centurion or with the Canaanite woman to tell His Apostles to take the Gospel beyond the confines of Israel. Nevertheless there was a clear and intrinsic connection between the Gentiles and the reason of His coming. As the "missionary" Bishop Fulton Sheen has remarked, noteworthy is the fact that in those moments where there is a very strong hint and suggestion of His death and Redemption, there was also some involvement of the Gentiles.

Quite apart from the miraculous contacts mentioned above, there were three other moments when pagans were closely associated with Jesus Christ. Each of these moments had some reference to His Passion, and to His death and glorification.

The first of these was at His birth. The shepherds represented the home mission; the Magi from the East stood for the foreign missions. Jew and Gentile were both next to the crib, but the coming of the Gentiles coincided with the first attempt upon Christ's life. Already the shadow of death had fallen across the path of the Infant Saviour.

The Magi, or *Magoi*, were possibly followers of Mazdeism, which Herodotus calls a priestly caste of Media and of Persia, worshippers of the sacred fire.

One can see in these wise and sincere men from the East the first non-Christian enquirers after truth. Rightly therefore Father Henry Heras chose them as patrons of his Indian Historical Research Institute, Bombay.

Another early contact of Jesus with the Gentile world was His sojourn in the ancient land of Egypt, so intimately connected with the earlier history of the chosen people. That land was later to become the seat of a flourishing Christianity and the cradle of Christian asceticism.

6. *The Greek Visitors*

“Where is he that has been born the king of the Jews?” was the query put by the Wise Men from the East to the Jerusalem pundits. Thirty years later, another group of wise men from the West approached the apostle Philip with the request, “Sir, we desire to see Jesus” (Jn 12:21).

These visitors, says Saint John, were *Hellenes*, that is to say Greek-speaking and of pagan stock. They had received some initiation in the religion of the one true God and come up to Jerusalem to worship at the feast. The legend of King Abgar V, told by Eusebius (*H. E.*, i, 12), who seems to believe in the literary correspondence between this monarch and our Lord, connects the origin of the Syrian Church of Edessa (modern Urfa) near the sources of the Euphrates, with these Greek pilgrims.

Philip, whom they approached, had a Greek

name and probably spoke this language. Philip consulted Andrew, a senior disciple in the school of Christ, and also with a Greek name, and the two introduced the strangers to the Master.

The Greek worshippers may have been impressed by the fact that Jesus had cleansed the temple, which He had declared to be a house of prayer for all the nations (Mk 11:17). They had witnessed Christ's triumph on Palm Sunday, which for Jesus was not the final glorification.

To the visitors' request Jesus replied that the time had come when he would be glorified. The glorification referred to was the lowest depths of His humiliation on the coming Friday, as well as the supreme exaltation of Easter morning. To bring the lesson of Redemption home to the Greeks, He used an example from nature, the parable of the grain of wheat. Immolation is always to be the condition of spiritual fructification. The grain of wheat has the germ of life in it, but that germ does not germinate into the production of other living grains, unless it is subjected to a process of death and burial in the earth.

The Greek-Gentiles in search of Wisdom had learned the basic principle of nature to be also the fundamental law of Christianity: the law of self-sacrifice.

7. Pagans by the Cross

The third historic moment when the Gentiles

were closely associated with the Saviour of the world was during His Crucifixion. Jesus was tried in a Roman court, and the wife of a Roman procurator interceded for Him. Simon of Cyrene, who may have been a Jew, but was originally from that Greek colony that was then the capital of a Roman province, was interested in watching this man going to His death and was forced by Roman soldiers to help Him carry the cross. The Roman soldiers who crucified Jesus were under the command of a centurion who, when he saw how Jesus died and how nature was moved at His death, expressed his belief in Him as the Son of God. He later assured Pilate that He had truly died. This centurion, or one of the soldiers, whom tradition has named Longinus or Lancer (*longue* is the Greek for "lance"), pierced the side of Jesus with a lance.

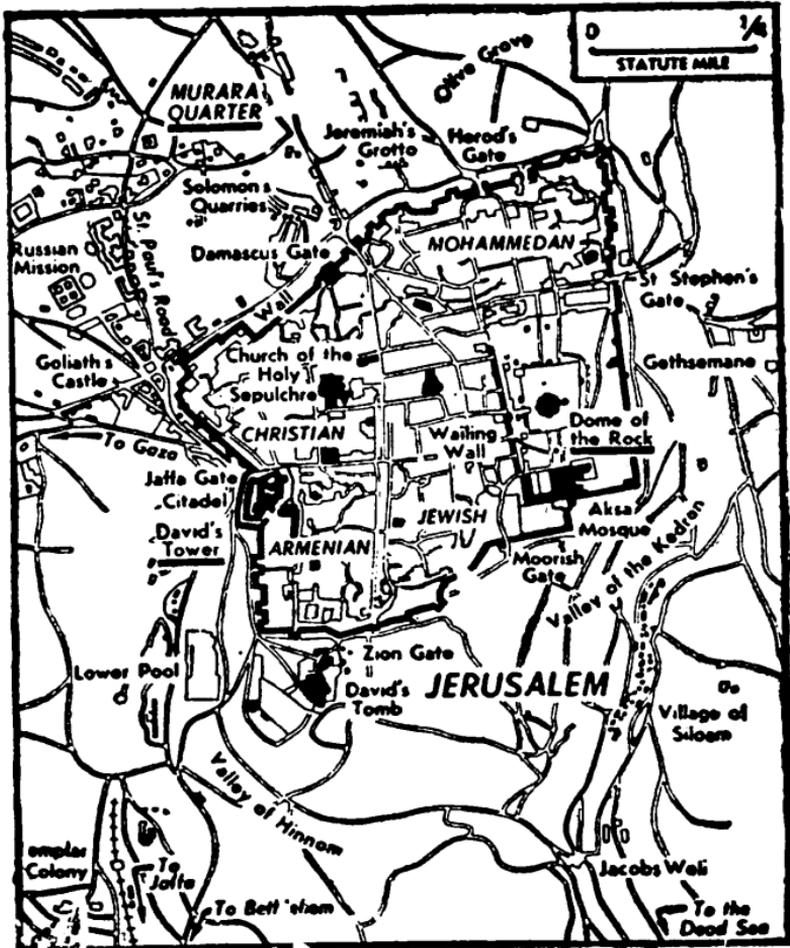
Together with three other "Saints of the Cross" (Andrew, Helena and Veronica), Longinus has now his mighty statue by Bernini in a niche at the base of one of the four enormous pentagonal pillars supporting the dome of St Peter's basilica in Rome.

Every member of the public, Jew or Gentile, could read the tablet containing the official reason of Christ's condemnation, for it was written not only in the sacred language of the Jews, but also in the universal languages of the gentile world, Greek and Latin.

As He had foretold, on being lifted up on the Cross Jesus drew "all men" to himself, not merely the people of Judea and Galilee. He had other

sheep too, which did not belong to the fold, but He would bring them in too, and they would listen to His voice.

Fifty days later, after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Christ's first vicar would welcome to the fold Jews of the Diaspora from as far east as Mesopotamia, and as far west as Rome. Soon the pagans from far and near would also flock in.



The Samaritans

I. MOUNT GERIZIM AND JACOB'S WELL

1. Racial Origin

At the time of Christ and for the previous seven centuries, the Samaritans were neither full-blooded Jews nor downright pagan strangers. They were a semi-alien race inhabiting the central portion of Palestine.

Samaria had formed part of the northern kingdom of Israel. After its conquest by Assyria in 722, King Sargon, leaving behind the peasants, deported into captivity twenty-seven thousand Samaritans of the higher classes of artisans, priests and nobles, and replaced them with Babylonian settlers, who imported their own national cult and customs. The strangers were soon absorbed into the native population, adopted the worship

of Yahweh and held Moses in great veneration. From this amalgam arose the mixed race which the Jews abominated as renegades.

Flavius Josephus says that when the Jews were in prosperity, the Samaritans claimed that they were allied to them in blood; but when matters were not well with the Jews, the Samaritans declared that they had no relationship with them but were descended from the Assyrian immigrants.

The mutual animosity was heightened when the Jews, on their return from the Babylonian captivity, refused the help of their separated brethren the Samaritans in rebuilding the Temple of Jerusalem. By the fourth century B.C. the Samaritans, who shared with the Jews the expectation of the coming Messiah, had a rival sanctuary built on Mount Gerizim, which they considered the only centre of legitimate worship. This caused constant and bitter hostilities between Jews and Samaritans.

John Hircanus, the son of Simon Maccabeus and his successor as high-priest and ruler, wrecked the temple completely in 128 B.C., but the Samaritans continued to sacrifice in the holy mountain and to maintain the autonomy of worship. They were as much monotheists as the Jews. As the Sadducees, they accepted only the Pentateuch as sacred scripture. From the Pentateuch they knew that God would one day restore His people through an emissary extraordinary like Moses. It is to this rather blurred Messianic concept that the Samaritan woman referred (Jn 4:25).

Another factor, a geographic one, that fanned the unfriendliness between the two races, was the fact that the shortest route between Galilee to the north and Judea to the south lay through Samaritan country. In this respect the situation was not unlike that of East Pakistan some years ago being separated from West Pakistan by more than a thousand miles of Indian territory.

During the period between the two Israeli-Arab wars, that of 1949, and that of 1967, Samaria was in Jordan territory. Pilgrims and tourists wishing to proceed from Samaria to Nazareth and the other holy places in Galilee had to retrace their steps to Jerusalem and cross from the Old City in Jordan to the New City in Israel through the only post of passage, the Mandlebaum Gate. The western frontier of Jordan formed a great bulge towards the sea, leaving Israel with a strip of coast land ranging from fifteen to forty miles. Arab sentries sat on the hills, gazing straight across Israel to the shipping in the Mediterranean. The bulge represented the greatest Arab advance towards the sea at the time of the cease fire in 1949. After the six-day war of June 1967, the river Jordan became the boundary between the two countries.

2. The Samaritan Woman

The repugnance on the part of the Jews to social and religious association with the Samaritans developed into intense antipathy as years rolled by. Saint John recounting the story of the Samaritan woman remarks in a matter-of-fact

aside, "The Jews, you must know, have no dealings with the Samaritans" (Jn 4:9). Or, as the New English Bible version reads, "Jews and Samaritans, it should be noted, do not use vessels in common."

Our Lord had to travel from Jerusalem to Galilee and "he was obliged to go by way of Samaria." How was this a "must"? Curiously, the historian Josephus uses the same expression: "Anyone who would go quickly from Galilee to Jerusalem *had necessarily (pantos edei)* to cross Samaria."

The alternative route was a detour across the Jordan and through Perea. It was longer but probably more common. No Jew would tread Samaritan soil if he could help it, at least in troubled times. But Jesus did not avoid the Samaritans.

The Samaritans were always ready to pick up a quarrel with the Jews and it was not unknown for these quarrels to finish in bloodshed. Sometimes the Samaritans contented themselves with a poor joke; they are said to have lighted fires on the hilltops to baffle the Jews who used such fires as signals. Most often they did no more than bar their doors.

There had been two or three occasions on which violence was used by both sides. The incident of A.D. 52, recorded by Josephus in his *Jewish Antiquities* (xx,6,1), was a most serious affair. A quarrel arose between the Samaritans and some Jerusalem-bound pilgrims on the border between the two provinces. The Galileans lost a few men,

and later inflicted terrible reprisals on the Samaritans. The governor of Syria soon restored order; and the incompetent procurator Cumanus who had failed to foresee or quell the conflict, was removed and sent to exile.

As the Master sat by Jacob's well, he asked the Samaritan woman, who had come to draw water, for the common favour of a drink, which is seldom denied to a weary traveller. The somewhat discourteous refusal of the woman is understandable: "What! You! a Jew, ask a drink of me, a Samaritan woman?"

Later in the conversation, when she discovered that the traveller was a heart-searcher, she changed the subject with a reference to the religious squabble between Jews and Samaritans as regards the centre of true worship.

Jesus showed her that the controversy between worship on Mount Gerizim and worship on Mount Moria would soon be superseded; that although salvation was to come out of the Jews, it was meant for all alike, Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles.

The sinful woman, the first human being to whom Christ announced His divinity, now turned into an ardent lay apostle, ran to the city of Sichar and invited one and all to come and see for themselves whether this prophet, who knew the innermost secrets of her life, could be the Christ. "And many of the Samaritans of that city came to believe that he is indeed the Saviour of the world." These were the first converts from among the despised hybrid race.

The Greek Church knows the Samaritan woman of St John's Gospel as Photina and remembers her on March 20. A legendary tradition, as early as the sixth century, says that after preaching the gospel in her country, she went to live in Carthage, where one of her sons became a Christian teacher and another died for the faith. She herself is said to have died after enduring three years' imprisonment for the faith. The name of "St Photina, a Samaritan woman," was erroneously entered in the Roman martyrology in the sixteenth century by Cardinal Baronius.

The well at which Jesus met the woman of Samaria was once in the open air and on ground level. Today the land has risen some twenty feet, and the well is covered by a dark and small Greek chapel usually splashed with water. Weary and thirsty travellers often lower a bucket which comes up brimming with ice-cold water which they drink—the same water which served as symbol of the living water that only Christ can give and becomes an inner spring welling up to eternal life.

II. A VILLAGE, A LEPER, A WAYFARER

3. *Inhospitable Samaritans*

St Luke tells us that when Jesus saw that the time of his final achievement was drawing near, "He turned his eyes steadfastly towards the way that led to Jerusalem" (9:51). His vision focused on the goal of Calvary, he decided to travel from Galilee, not by the roundabout way of the Jordan but by the direct route of Samaria. He and his disciples would have to spend the first night in Samaritan territory. The travellers were refused hospitality "because their journey was in the direction of Jerusalem", the rival centre of Jewish religion. In face of such fanaticism the two "Sons of Thunder" became indignant and wanted the Master to call down fire from heaven to avenge the insult, as Elijah had done of old (1 Kings 1:10-12).

Their misguided zeal, however, earned them a severe rebuke and a stern lesson on the spirit of meekness and universal salvation that impregnated the New Law. Without punishing the insolence of these Samaritans, the party set out for another village.

4. *Grateful Samaritan*

Out of ten lepers who were cured, only one had the decency of saying "thank you" to their benefactor; "and this was a Samaritan" (Lk 17:16).

The other nine, who were Jews, may have thought that they had a certain right to the miraculous cure. They lacked delicacy and called forth the Saviour's sorrowful remonstrance: "Were not all ten made clean? And the other nine, where are they? Not one has come back to give God the praise, except this stranger." The Samaritan stranger could hardly comprehend the fact that he was cured by one who belonged to the Jewish race. But Jesus, for whom there was no Jew or Samaritan, commended his gratitude.

This privileged man was a heretic, an excommunicate from Judaism. In anticipation of the call of the Gentiles, the barrier separating the chosen people from foreign nations was being lowered.

5. The Good Samaritan

In the immortal parable illustrating genuine love of one's neighbour, our Lord made a Samaritan the hero of the story (Lk 10:33). "The Good Samaritan" has gone down in history and in literature as the prototype of a genuinely charitable person; which cannot be said of the Jewish priest or Levite who preceded him. The Samaritan and not the Jew—the enquiring lawyer was obliged to conclude—understood that neighbourly love extends to every human being in need, be he Jew or non-Jew, friend or foe.

The parable of the Good Samaritan has proved a fertile field for allegorical applications. Christ, who had been given the opprobrious name of

“Samaritan” by his enemies (Jn 8:48), some authors say, was not averse to comparing Himself to a good Samaritan. “Christ by becoming man”, wrote Saint Bede the Venerable, “came near to us and bending over us in our wretchedness, healed our wounds pouring in that oil and wine which are the healing sacraments of our souls. The inn in which we are is His Church which takes care of us.”

It is certain that the Samaritan of the parable is described in terms which elsewhere in the Gospels the evangelists have reserved for Christ. The Samaritan is “moved to compassion” (literally, stirred in his inwards). The Greek word *esplanchnisthe* suggests a very human emotion. This is the very word used by the evangelists when they wanted to describe Christ’s compassionate heart towards the material and moral suffering of individuals or multitudes. Archbishop Goodier of Bombay made in one of his books a special little study of these passages. Christ’s heart, he tells us, went out to the widow of Naim, to the two blind men, to the leper of the first chapter of Saint Mark, to the possessed boy near Mount Tabor, to the sick in the multitude, to the crowds who were like sheep without shepherd, and to the crowds whom he later fed in the wilderness.

There are two other parables in which the same term occurs; in one it is applied to the king who forgave the unmerciful debtor, and in the other it expresses the loving kindness of the father towards his prodigal son. These several sketches form a composite picture bringing out Christ’s and the

Father's compassion towards suffering and sinful mankind.

It may here be noted that the Jewish lawyer, when asked who had behaved as good neighbour, avoided to pronounce the word 'Samaritan' and used a circumlocution. On the other hand, the most offensive term a Jew could apply to anyone was to call him a 'Samaritan', with a reference to apostasy from the true faith. Jesus took no notice of this national term of insult when applied to Himself.

III. SAMARITAN CONVERTS

6. *Christianity in Samaria*

Although the Saviour told His disciples that during His mortal life they were not to preach in the Samaritan country (Mt 10:5), just before His Ascension He commanded them to bear witness to Him in Samaria as well as elsewhere (Acts 1:8).

In response to this parting mandate, we see in Acts chapter eight Philip the Deacon evangelizing the Samaritans, and then Peter and John preaching the word of the Lord and administering Confirmation in many Samaritan hamlets (Acts 8:5-25).

Among this first batch of Samaritan converts, there is the notorious Simon the Magician, who received the baptismal waters from Philip but apostatized later. Many Fathers of the church are of opinion that his conversion was a fake. This sorcerer, who had been regarded by some as a divinity incarnate, was so intrigued by the miracles which he saw the apostles perform through the Holy Spirit, that he tried to buy with money this power from Peter. In this attempt at trafficking in spiritual gifts we find the origin of the word *simony*, and perhaps the germ of the Faust legend.

Saint Justin, the Christian apologist and martyr, the best known among the Fathers of the second century, was born a pagan about A.D. 100, at Vespasian's Flavia Neapolis, today's Nablus, just a mile from Sichem and Jacob's Well. Converted to Christianity when about 30 years of age, he taught and defended the Christian religion in

Asia Minor and at Rome, where he suffered martyrdom about the year 165. Two *Apologies* bearing his name and his *Dialogue with the Jew Tryphon* have come down to us. Leo XIII had a Mass and an Office composed in his honour and set his feast for 14th April. His first *Apology* contains precious information on the lengthy Eucharistic Prayer that surrounded the Consecration in the Mass of his time, and which has been decisive in the formulation of our modern Canon.

Little is known of the later history of Christianity among the Samaritans. Certainly not all embraced the religion of Christ, although they with the Jews, as Justin himself testifies in his writings, were expecting the Messiah.

They are a peaceable group, a touristic curiosity, fully conscious of the attraction they and their sacred mountain and Pentateuch parchment exercise on the trickle of pilgrims and sightseers who daily visit and photograph them.

Today there is only a remnant of a few hundred Samaritans, most of them in the city of Nablus. Each year on Mount Gerizim they still sacrifice the Passover lambs according to the ancient Israelite ritual. The entire community of about 150 members camps out on the top of the sacred mountain. On the eve of the Passover, as the full moon rises, the High Priest intones the prayers, and the slayers draw their knives across the throats of the lambs. The tent-doors are smeared with the blood; and the lambs are then roasted and gulped down in large mouthfuls to simulate the haste with which the Israelites set out of Egypt.

Priesthood and Sanhedrin

I. PRIESTS AND LEVITES

1. Aaron and Levi

The parable of the Good Samaritan does not place the Jewish clergy in good light. The Priest and the Levite, who did not deign to dismount to bring succour to the poor wounded wayfarer, are purposely introduced to contrast the hardheartedness of men consecrated to the service of the altar, and who by virtue of their office might be expected to offer a helping hand, with the compassionate charity of a Samaritan stranger, who forgetting national antipathies and racial hatreds, obeys a natural sentiment of humanity. The two levitical figures lend besides a touch of realism to the story, since Jericho, their destination, was a priestly city and their duties would often oblige them to pass along that road, and their enforced relations

with the brigands would tend to assure them safe-conduct.

The priesthood, as an organized profession, was unknown in the days of the patriarchs. Sacrifices, the central act of public worship, were performed by the head of the family or clan. In Genesis we read that Cain and Abel, Noah and Jacob were the ministers of their own sacrifices, and that Abraham and Isaac built altars.

The priesthood came into existence under Moses and took on a very real importance under the kings, when the Temple became a national institution. In the Mosaic organization there was one tribe, the tribe of Levi, that was set aside for the service of religion. But not all the members of the tribe of Levi were to participate in an equal measure in the divine worship. The priesthood was conferred exclusively on one of the Levitical branches that of Aaron, the lawgiver's brother. The other members of the tribe were to serve as ministers to the priests. In addition, however, Aaron was chosen by God to the high-priesthood, an office which was to be for life and was transmitted to Aaron's first-born, and to his descendants according to the right of the first-born.

Thus there arose a threefold distinction within the Levitical tribe. First, there were the ordinary *Levites* or non-priestly members; secondly, there were the *priests*, that is, all the male descendants of Aaron and their sons; thirdly, the *high-priests*, that is, Aaron, then his first-born son and his successor according to the right of the first-born.

At the time of Christ there was a complete distinction between the priests, who claimed to be descendants of Zadoc and who alone performed the sacred rites, and the Levites who constituted the Temple menial staff.

2. *Priestly Duties*

The duties of the priests were of a threefold nature. *In the Holy Place*, they were to remove the old showbread and substitute fresh every Sabbath day, put incense on the altar of incense every morning and evening, and trim the lamps of the golden lampstand. *In the court of the Temple*, they were to offer the various sacrifices, sprinkle the blood of sacrificial victims, and bless the people after the morning sacrifice. *Outside the Temple* they were to judge cases of legal impurity as well as the more difficult civil and religious trials, and act as interpreters and teachers of the Law of God. Because of their frequent neglect in imparting instruction to the people, this task was assumed by the prophets before the exile and by Scribes later. In the time of Christ the specialized study and interpretation of the Torah was not a priestly concern but of the Scribes.

Lest the sacred service be interrupted at any time in the Temple, king David divided the priestly families into twenty-four classes or priestly courses, each of which took a week's turn of service at the Temple. Among the priests on duty in a particular week, the "thirteen offices" were distributed by lot.

Ranking next in authority to the high-priest was the temple superintendent (*ho strategos tou hierou*) who was in command of the Levitical guard or temple police (Acts 4:1). It had to be determined who would immolate the victims, receive the offerings, burn the incense, sound the silver trumpets, bless the people, control the courts, manage the temple treasury, judge cases of open crime within the sacred precincts.

Thus we read in the opening chapter of Saint Luke that Zechariah, who belonged to Abijah's turn of office and happened to be performing his priestly functions that week, had been chosen by lot to go into the sanctuary and burn incense.

Most of the priests and Levites lived in Jerusalem or in the immediate neighbourhood, but some resided in rather distant towns, to which they returned after their week of service in Jerusalem.

3 *The Tasks of the Levites*

The duties of Levites were humbler. They were doorkeepers of the Temple, musicians, police officers, they assisted at the sacrifice by jointing and skinning the animals, they prepared the showbread, they supervised the storehouses and holy vessels: in short, they were the sacristans and secretaries of the Temple administration, and the clerks and ushers of the supreme council or Sanhedrin.

They belonged to a distinctly lower social rank. They were forbidden upon pain of death to go

into the sanctuary or touch the altar, which is a convincing proof that the descendants of Levi had fallen into evil days and were no longer held in high consideration.

The Talmud asserts that the priests in charge of keeping order in the temple premises were very severe towards Levites on duty.

“When the Controller of the Temple makes his round of inspection, escorted by torch-bearers, and finds one of the Levites asleep, he gives him a sound thrashing, and many indeed set fire to his clothes. One day a roaring noise was heard in the court and someone asked, ‘What is that?’ ‘It is nothing,’ they replied, ‘nothing at all: only a Levite being beaten.’”

Besides the Levites, there were other men employed to do the more menial labours around the tabernacle and the temple, known by the generic name of “hewers of wood and drawers of water” (Josh 9:21), a phrase which in every language stands for labourers of the lowest kind, mere drudges.

Even considering the variety of duties in an organization as vast and complex as the temple worship, and that each minister had to function only a few weeks each year, one is still surprised at the huge figure of twenty-thousand given by Josephus (who tends to inflate his figures) as constituting the temple staff. There was a popular saying in Jerusalem to the effect that there were as many priests and Levites in the temple as there were stones in its walls. Was this a figure of speech?

II. THE HIGH-PRIEST

4. *High-Priest or Chief Priest*

In the Old Dispensation the high-priest exercised supreme authority over the temple worship and personnel. He was the mediator *par excellence* between God and the people. Under the Has-moneans, he emerged as the political leader of the people, and in the New Testament he presided over the Sanhedrin, the highest governing body of the Jewish nation.

Three decades before the birth of Christ, Herod the Great assumed the right to name the high-priest, making the office no longer hereditary and for life. This policy was followed by the Roman rulers, who at times kept the high-priest's attire in the fortress Antonia and surrendered it for use on special feast days only.

Josephus informs us that there were as many as twenty-eight high-priests from the year 37 B.C. to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70, when the high-priesthood came to an end. Of these high-priests four are of greater interest to students of the Bible: *Annas I*, the first priest mentioned in the New Testament (A.D. 6-15; Lk 3:2); who was succeeded by his five sons, and by his more famous son-in-law Joseph *Caiphas* (A.D. 18-36; Lk 3:2), who condemned Christ to death (Mt 26: 3, 57); *Ananias*, before whom Saint Paul appeared for trial (Acts 23:2; 24:1); and *Annas II*, who, according to Josephus in his *Jewish Antiquities*,

had Saint James the Less, bishop of Jerusalem, stoned to death.

In the Gospels and in the Acts, the Greek word used for high-priest is *archiereus*, commonly translated as chief priest. The word occurs very frequently in the plural, which, since there was only one high-priest at any given time, creates something of a problem. The plural occurs often also in Josephus.

As the word is generally accompanied by "the elders", "the rulers" and "the Scribes", it appears that these expressions mean "the members of the Sanhedrin". Most exegetes understand the term "chief priests" to signify a group composed of the ruling high-priest, the former high-priests who had been deposed by Herod or by the Roman procurators, and the leading members of the priestly families from which the high-priests were chosen.

5. *Annas and Caiphas*

Annas I was appointed by Quirinius, the Roman governor of Syria who ordered the census that brought Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Nine years later he was deposed by the procurator Valerius Gratus, who after three short pontificates appointed Caiphas. Annas' influence was so great, even after his removal from office, that he secretly or openly controlled the pontificate of Caiphas. In the popular mind the former pontiff was considered as still being in

office. He is thus mentioned in the Gospel in connection with the beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist (Lk 3:2), with the trial of Christ (Jn 18:13), and, in the Acts, with the trial of Peter and John (Acts 4:6).

Caiphas, as most of the high-priests, was a member of the Sadducean party. He was appointed by the immediate predecessor of Pontius Pilate, and was an implacable enemy of Christ. After the raising of Lazarus, he advised the Sanhedrin to put Jesus to death. This he did in words more significant than he was aware: "You do not reflect that it is best for us if one man is put to death for the sake of the people, to save a whole nation from destruction" (Jn 11:50).

At his palace the council of chief priests, Scribes and elders was held to devise measures for the arrest of our Lord (Mt 26:3-5), and later the Sanhedrin, of which he was the chairman, condemned Jesus to death (Mt 26:57). After Pentecost, Peter and John were brought before Caiphas, who forbade them to preach in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:6-18). Caiphas himself was deposed from office by procurator Vitellius in A.D. 36.

6. *The Christian Presbyter*

The Hebrew designation for priest was *kohen*, a word that is still preserved in the common Jewish family name of "Cohen".

It is remarkable that the Greek word for priest, *hiereus*, is used in the New Testament only in

regard to the Jewish priests, and rarely to Christ Himself or to all Christians in general; never in reference to a Christian priest. Jesus acknowledged the authority of the Jewish priests, though in the parable of the Good Samaritan he criticized indirectly the lack of neighbourly charity among the priests and Levites.

When Christianity began to spread rapidly in Jerusalem, a large number of Jewish priests accepted the faith (Acts 6:7). During the early years of the Church, Christians continued to take part in the Jewish worship. But they also held their own liturgical meetings, presided over by the "elders" (*presbyteroi*, whence our words presbyter and priest) whom the Apostles appointed in every local Christian community. But the same *presbyteroi* were also, in the churches outside Jerusalem, called *episcopoi* or "overseers", from which Greek word our word "bishop" is derived.

7. *The Eternal High-Priest*

The Epistle to the Hebrews is the classical document to prove that Christ is, from the moment of the Incarnation, the only High-Priest of the New Covenant, the only mediator between God and man. Even as of old the high-priest entered the Holy of Holies to make atonement with the sacrificial blood, so Christ has entered the heavenly sanctuary to offer His own blood to the Eternal Father. He died but once, yet He continues to offer His sacrifice and intercession to God for all the people.

Jesus exercised His priestly functions throughout His life by prayer and sacrifice, by His self-oblation in the sacerdotal prayer at the Last Supper and by His sacrificial death on the cross. More than once He spoke of the sacrificial aspect of His death in terms of ransom and vicarious satisfaction. He was called by the Father to the High-Priesthood, but in the line of Melchizedek (Heb 5:6). The Levitical line of Aaron was imperfect, and was superseded by the everlasting and exclusive priesthood of Christ.

The entire seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews extols the superiority of the Melchizedekian priesthood, which is a type and figure of Christ's. Melchizedek, the priest king of Salem, made an offering of bread and wine to Abraham; this patriarch in turn acknowledged Melchizedek's priesthood by giving him tithes and receiving his blessing. This was a sign—the inspired author concludes—of the higher order of Melchizedek's priestly dignity, to whom the ancestor of the entire Levitic line of priests paid homage as to one superior to himself and to all his descendants, among whom would be the priests of the Aaronic and Levitic line in which the office would be transmitted from father to son. These were very mortal men, and represented a priesthood which would be of a temporary and transitory nature, whereas that of Melchizedek and that of Christ were a lasting personal priesthood—"a priest forever".

III. THE SANHEDRIN

8. *Origin and History*

At the time of Jesus the greatest institution in Judaism next to the high-priesthood was the Great Sanhedrin, the supreme national-religious body.

The word Sanhedrin is an Aramaic form of the Greek *Synedrion* (sitting together, council). In addition, the Greek-speaking Jews called their council, as can be seen from the Gospels and Acts and from Josephus, *gerousia* (the Spartan senate), *boule* (the Athenian council), *presbyterion* (council of elders).

The origins of this institution are somewhat obscure. A body of ancients, responsible in a certain measure for the conduct of affairs in the Jewish community, existed at the time of Ezra during the period of Persian domination (536-331 B.C.).

This limited form of autonomous government, granted to the Jews by foreign rulers, suffered a diminution of authority when these were supplanted by the native monarchies of the Maccabees and Hasmonians, and later by the tyrannical Herods who left it the mere shadow of authority. Upon accession to the throne in 37 B.C., Herod the Great put many members of the Sanhedrin to death, and appointed or deposed the high-priests at will.

Under the Roman procurators, however, the powers of the Sanhedrin were notably expanded. The Romans, as many other empire-builders did in later centuries, applied in Palestine and elsewhere their constant principle of permitting subjected peoples complete freedom in religious matters, and a restricted home-rule in civil affairs; they thus found it convenient to entrust the exercise of this twofold liberty to the Great Sanhedrin of Jerusalem.

Early in the Judeo-Roman war (A.D. 66-73), the Sanhedrin played the leading role, but soon the Zealots or nationalists seized the government. With the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple, the Sanhedrin and the high-priesthood passed from history.

9. Membership

Originally selected by the high-priest from the sacerdotal aristocracy, the Sanhedrin had come in Roman times to co-opt into its membership a rising number of Pharisees and a few professional Scribes. Their meeting place was the hall Gazim within the temple precincts. The Great Council consisted of seventy-one members, including its president, the high-priest. The number seventy is thought to have been inspired by the number of elders which God ordered Moses to choose as his advisers (Num 11:16). This was also the maximum number of cardinals fixed by Pope Sixtus V in 1586, confirmed later by Canon Law, but exceeded for the first time in four centuries by John XXIII in 1958.

The New Testament often refers to the members of the Sanhedrin as the chief priests, Scribes and elders (Mk 14:53-55). Thus the Sanhedrists belonged to three groups.

a) The *high-priest* was the head of the Council. Thus the high-priest Hircanus called a meeting to try Herod in 47 B.C. The high-priest Caiphas presided at the trial of Jesus, and the high-priest Ananias at the trial of Paul (Acts 23:2). In a wider sense, the term chief priest included former high-priests and the heads and the representatives of the sacerdotal families from which the high-priest was usually chosen (Acts 4:5-6). All these belonged to the Sadducean party.

b) Another group was made up of *Scribes* or students of the Law, who were largely Pharisees, exercised wide authority in the Sanhedrin, and were highly respected by the people.

c) The third order, the *elders* of the people, represented the lay aristocracy, being outstanding men chosen from among the heads of the chief families.

10. Authority and Jurisdiction

The practical power of the Sanhedrin was naturally dependent on the presence or absence of a national monarch. Under the Romans it was in practice the highest national governing body in the land, regulating religious affairs in complete freedom, and civil matters within the limits set down by Rome.

The Sanhedrin was also the highest court of justice, and therefore was also called the *bet-din* or house of judgment. It had at its disposal police, could make arrests and inflict corporal punishment, such as scourging. In criminal trials the death sentence voted by the Sanhedrin needed the ratification of the Roman procurator (Jn 18:30).

Besides the supreme Sanhedrin of Jerusalem, there existed minor Sanhedrins or local tribunals in the different Jewish communities in Palestine and abroad. Their members were the most prominent Jews of the locality, and the president the ruler of the synagogue.

Theoretically the jurisdiction of the Great Sanhedrin of Jerusalem extended over the entire Jewish world. But at the time of Jesus it was hardly ever exercised beyond the Palestine borders. The Jews who lived at any great distance from the centre appealed to the supreme national council only in extraordinary cases, usually when they could not obtain justice from their local councils.

The indirect authority of the Jerusalem council over all Jewish communities was recognized by the Romans. Thus, for example, it sent a deputation to John the Baptist who was preaching in Transjordan (Jn 1:19-25), and conferred upon young Saul the authority to arrest Jewish Christians in Damascus, which was outside Judea, and to bring them to Jerusalem under custody for trial (Acts 9:2; 22:5).

After the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in the year 70, the rabbinical scholars or scribes assembled at Jamnia the modern Yavne, 18 miles south of Tel Aviv-Jaffa, where they re-established themselves as a religious body for the guidance of the people, and, so the only judicial body in existence, it took the name of Sanhedrin. Here they drew up the definitive canon of the Jewish Scriptures, and the city which Herod the Great had embellished with villas and colonnades and which had become an enclave of imperial property in the province of Judea, became for a time the spiritual capital of the nation. But in 135, after the second Jewish revolt, all Jewish life here, as in the rest of Judea, came to an end.

3

Yahweh's Presence

14. Tent and Ark
15. The Three Temples
16. The Synagogue

Yannick's Journal

1st and 2nd

3rd and 4th

5th and 6th

Tent and Ark

I. YAHWEH TABERNACLES AMONG MEN

1. Ark, Temple, Synagogue

The following three chapters are dedicated to a summary survey of the places where God gave special manifestations of His Presence among His chosen people.

The Presence of God among His people is a theme that occupied Israel's writers for many centuries. From His earliest presence among them, as symbolized in the ark in the desert, they were constantly amazed at this unprecedented 'God-with-us'. From the Mosaic times, transcendent Yahweh chose the Ark of the Covenant, sheltered in the Tabernacle of the Testimony, as the visible localization of His active presence and abiding protection. The Ark and the Tent were the

epiphany of a God whom Israel did not know previously and the manifestation of the divine saving initiative which first came into operation through Moses.

Following Yahweh's command, Solomon built a magnificent Temple which, in substitution for the Tabernacle, should house the Ark and its precious contents. When this first temple was destroyed, the Ark disappeared and was seen and heard of no more. Two temples, with an empty Holy of Holies, followed in succession, until the third temple was razed to the ground by Titus' soldiers, never to be replaced.

Jews living in exile, in the dispersion, or very far from the Temple of Jerusalem, felt the need of effecting a meeting with Yahweh. This they could do by hearing God's written word in common assemblies in the synagogues. There God was actively present in His inspired word.

The Fathers of the Church have pointed out to a parallel between the two incarnations of the Word of God: in human flesh and in human language. Just as we know that the Son of God became *like* men in all things, except for sin, nay more, He is truly Man and truly God: so also we can say that the written Word of God is *like* human language in every way, except that it can contain no formal error, nay more, it *is* human language in the fullest sense, and all the while it *is* the Word of God.

The Second Vatican Council (Constitution on

Revelation, 13) referring, in the words of Saint John Chrysostom, to the marvellous "condescension" of the eternal wisdom of God, by which He has adapted His language with thoughtful concern for our weak human nature, makes the following statement: "The words of God, expressed in human language, have been made like human discourse, just as of old the Word of the eternal Father, when He took to Himself the weak flesh of humanity, became like other men."

2. A Covenant and its Symbol

Throughout the history of the Chosen People, God's way of dealing with men (Abraham, Moses, David) was by means of covenants, also called alliances, treaties or testaments.

Covenants between men or between nations in ancient times were pacts, whereby rights were recognized and obligations established in a public and ceremonial manner.

Covenants entered upon between God and men to whom He manifested His will, were modelled on these purely human contracts. It must be noted, however, that Israel and God by means of these covenants did not meet on equal terms. God is "bound" by His promises only because He makes them and cannot be false to His promises. Only in this sense can we speak of a bilateral contract between God and man. Man, on the other hand, is strictly bound to observe his part of the agreement; when he does so, God freely fulfils the promises He has made.

On Mount Sinai God entered into a solemn covenant with the Israelites, and through Moses gave them the Ten Commandments. He reminded His people that He had brought them out of Egypt to be His peculiar possession, a priestly nation and a holy kingdom. As in the past, so in the future He would guide and protect them, if they would observe His commandments. Whereupon the people with one voice shouted: "We will do all the Lord has said" (Ex 19:8).

To keep the people mindful of His providence and faithful to their promises, God commanded Moses to build a sanctuary, which might be the centre of worship throughout their peregrinations in the desert, and the evident manifestation of His invisible presence among them. This desert shrine was a tent which, through the influence of the Vulgate, has become known in Christian literature as the Tabernacle. The word "tabernacle" is always used in the Douay and several other versions. But since the term is also employed to designate the box-like receptacle on the altar of a Catholic church, in which the holy Eucharist is reserved, the Confraternity and other versions use the word "tent" in reference to Yahweh's dwelling.

The Hebrew name meant the Tent of Meeting, referring not to the meeting of the people for worship, but to Yahweh's meeting or rendezvous with Moses 'face to face' or 'mouth to mouth', the meeting of God and His people Israel.

3 . *The Tabernacle and its Court*

The Tabernacle may be defined as the portable shrine of the Hebrews, built to serve as God's dwelling place for this nomadic people in their periodic migrations until, after settling in the Promised Land, they could worship in the magnificent temple built by Solomon.

Outwardly the Tabernacle resembled much the common nomadic tents of the Israelites. The specifications of the sanctuary, however, as contained in Exodus (ch 26-27 and 35-38), indicate that it was an elaborate and colourful structure. It consisted of a rectangular enclosure, covering an area of about 150 by 75 feet, fenced off from the rest of the encampment with a series of linen curtains suspended by hooks from silver rods attached to columns of acacia wood.

The rectangular court was divided into two equal squares. In the western square stood the Tabernacle, while the eastern contained the ritual appurtenances, the most important of which were the altar for the burnt offerings, and the bronze laver in which the priests could wash their hands and feet before officiating.

The materials used in the making of these accessories were simpler and less costly than those used in the making of the Tabernacle and its implements: bronze instead of gold, linen hangings instead of costly many-coloured curtains. This was because the sanctity of an object diminished the further it was removed from the Holy of Holies.

At the far end of the court was the Tabernacle proper, a rectangular structure about 55 feet long and 15 feet wide, made of acacia wood and richly ornamented with silver. The Tabernacle contained two compartments, of which the outer and larger one was known as the *Sanctum* or Holy Place. In the antechamber were placed the seven-branched candle-stick, the golden altar of incense, and the table on which were set out 12 loaves of bread, called the loaves of proposition or showbread.

The small inner chamber was the most sacred place, called with a Semitic superlative the Holy of Holies, the *Sancta Sanctorum*. In it rested the Ark of the Covenant, an oblong chest of *settim* or acacia wood, overlaid with purest gold.

II. THE HISTORY OF THE ARK

4. *Description of the Ark*

As described in the book of Exodus (ch. 25-26), the Ark was constructed in the shape of a trunk or chest, about four feet in length, two and half feet in width and depth. The boards and pillars were of acacia wood, overlaid within and without with pure gold. Over these boards were stretched curtains of fine twined linen worked in threads of blue and purple and scarlet twice-dyed, with all the embroiderer's art. These fine draperies were covered by undyed curtains of goats' hair, and these by skins of rams. Gilded rods were passed through four golden rings, one at each corner, so that the Ark could be carried.

The top of the Ark, surmounted by a golden crown or rim, was covered with a slab of solid gold, which was known as the *kapporet*, generally translated as "propitiatory" or "throne of mercy", where God's feet were conceived as resting as on a footstool. This plate was surmounted by two cherubim wrought of pure gold, facing each other and overshadowing the Ark with the outstretched wings, in reverence to Yahweh's unseen presence. The underlying conception is well illustrated by the representation of Hiram (king of Tyre and a personal friend of David and Solomon) seated on a throne supported on either side by cherubim, which has been found at Byblos, some forty miles north of Sidon.

5. *From Mount Sinai to Mount Zion*

Constructed at Sinai, the Tent of Meeting was solemnly dedicated on the first anniversary of the departure of the Hebrews from "the house of bondage". It contained the two stone tablets on which Yahweh had inscribed the Ten Commandments, and later a golden urn with the manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and a scroll with the 'second Law' or Deuteronomy.

On leaving the base of Mount Sinai, the Ark went in the van before the people, leading them from station to station, or like a king in the midst of his troops, directing the march and clearing the way for the advancing Israelites, while the priests who surrounded it signalled the orders of Yahweh. Used as the palladium, or sacred object which guaranteed victory over the enemies, the Ark was almost identified with Yahweh himself.

The Scripture narrative tells us that whenever the Ark was lifted from the ground after a halt, Moses would intone the Marching Song of the Ark, "Bestir thyself, Lord, and rout thy enemies; confront thy ill-wishers and put them to flight." And when the Ark was set down again at a new station, the people would chant, "Restore thy presence, Lord, to the thronging armies of Israel" (Num 10:35-36; Ps 67:2).

When the people broke camp, the Levites took the structure of the Tabernacle and Ark to pieces and assembled them together again at the new camping ground (Ex 40:34-38). The Tabernacle was thus carried through the desert of the Sinai

peninsula, sojourned for several years at the desert oasis of Kadesh in the extreme south of Palestine, skirted the plains of Moab to the northeast until it reached the river Jordan, near the place where this empties itself into the Dead Sea. The Ark led the way and halted where the stream ceased to flow, until the tribes had crossed to the other side which was already the Promised Land.

In the long halts, the Ark remained within the Tent for the most part; but it was on occasion taken out, particularly at the time of battle, as the very sight of it threw Israel's enemy into panic.

During the period of the conquest of Canaan, the Ark was stationed at Gilgal, not far from Jericho. For seven days it was carried in the midst of the host around Jericho until the city walls crashed to the ground (Josh 6:1-20). After the settlement of the Israelites, Joshua set up the Tabernacle at Shiloh, where it remained during the period of the Judges (Josh 18:1).

Around the year 1050 B.C., having rashly been taken into the field of battle, as a talisman which was expected to work wonders in the struggle against the Philistines, the Ark was captured by the enemy (1 Sam 4), but was soon sent back to the Hebrew territory, as plague broke out wherever the hostile trophy was carried.

Finally David brought it to his new capital Jerusalem and installed it in a new tent (2 Sam 6). Solomon then built his Temple to house the Ark in its inmost and holiest recess (1 Kings 8).

Henceforth there is no historical record of the Ark in the Bible. Presumably it shared the fate of the Temple, and disappeared when the Temple itself was destroyed by the Assyrians in 587 B.C. (Jer 3:16). The Ark is mentioned in the New Testament, where it appears in the heavenly temple (Hebr 9:4; Rev 11:19).

6. Fate of the Ark

As to what became of the Ark at the fall of Jerusalem, there exist several traditions. According to an unhistorical tradition, cited in the second book of Maccabees (2:4-8), Jeremiah saved from destruction the Ark, along with the Tabernacle and the altar of incense, by hiding it in a cave on Mount Nebo, and stopping up its entrance. Soon some Jews climbed the mountain to mark the spot, but find it could not. The exact place was supposed to remain ever unknown till the day when God would bring His people together once more.

Side by side with this apocryphal tradition, we find another mentioned in the Apocalypse of Ezra, according to which the Ark was taken by the victorious armies that ransacked the holy city. This is most possible, chiefly in view of the fact we learn from the second book of Kings, that the Babylonian troops carried away from the temple whatever brass, silver and gold they could lay their hands upon (25:13-17).

Either of these traditions is more reliable than

that adopted by the redactors of the Talmud, who tell us that the Ark was hidden by king Josiah in a most secret place prepared by Solomon in case the Temple might be taken or set on fire. It was a common belief among the rabbis of old that it would be found at the coming of the Messiah. One thing is certain, the Ark is never mentioned among the appurtenances of the second temple.

7. Reminiscent of the Ark

Archeologists know that such portable tent shrines were relatively common among the ancient Bedouin. A relief from the Roman period, found at Palmyre in central Syria, shows a camel bearing upon its back a small sacred tent.

Vestiges have also survived into modern times. The Ruwalla Bedouin, who wander the Syrian desert, possess a strange structure bedecked with ostrich feathers and held up by acacia poles, which they captured from rival nomads in 1793. This is the Markab or Ark of Ishmael, normally standing in front of a goat-hair tent, a sacred symbol regarded as the rallying point beyond which they will not retreat. For generations, whenever the tribe has moved as a body, the Markab has been placed on a camel to lead the migration.

III. THE ARK IN THE NEW LAW

8. *Stephen and Paul*

In his speech before his death, Stephen reminded the Jews that Moses had made the Tent of Testimony according to a divinely revealed pattern (Acts 7:44). But this divine command was an innovation, since the Patriarchs before Moses had no such tabernacle. The tent, besides, was to develop later on into a temple. All this favoured Stephen's thesis that tent or temple could be abolished or replaced, since God's majesty was not enclosed or locked in any of these material structures, as Solomon had affirmed in his prayer of dedication of the Temple (1 Kings 8:27).

The Epistle to the Hebrews (8:5) recalls the same injunction of Yahweh's to Moses, that the tabernacle should be made in accordance with the pattern shown to him on the mountain. The Levitical priests served a sanctuary that was only an image or shadow of the spiritual realities to come. Moses received some revelation of the Messianic realities which his Hebrew Tent and Ark were to foreshadow.

9. *The Eagle of Patmos*

To John on the island of Patmos a vision was granted of the Ark of the Testament in the heavenly temple (Rev 11:19). In the Mosaic

Tabernacle and in the Solomonic Temple the Ark had been closed off from view. By the time of Christ so great had the awe for the Holy of Holies grown that, although the Ark had disappeared, access was allowed only to the high-priest and that once a year on the Day of Atonement.

The new dispensation is now indicated by the fact that "God's heavenly temple was thrown open, and the ark of the covenant was plain to view" (11:19). Christians—the new Israel—would be joyously astounded by this statement, for Jewish tradition expected the reappearance of the Ark when the kingdom of Israel would be re-established.

In the first chapter of Saint John's Gospel there is a sentence (which we used to say almost daily at Mass till 1964, and which we still say thrice a day in the *Angelus*) that appears in better light when considered in connection with the history of the Tabernacle of the old Law.

The sentence, the most tremendous ever written, says: "And the Word was made flesh, and came to dwell among us" (Jn 1:14). We are here immediately concerned only with the fact that God made Man *dwelt* in our midst.

Commentators in general, and some translators (such as Rieu), rightly bring out the meaning of the Greek verb *eskenosen*, often rendered by "he dwelt", by translating it "he pitched his tent". *Skene*, whence our English *scene*, is a shepherd's hut or a nomad's tent, and the verb *skenoun* is to pitch one's tent.

The meaning here is that God spread his fleshly tent, He tabernacled, among men. The suggestion is of a brief sojourn, but all thought of a momentary apparition is excluded. In thus evoking the distant nomadic past of his people, John evokes both the transitory character and the intimacy of nomadic life; the sense of intimacy is strengthened by the prepositional phrase, which is almost equivalent to 'within us'.

The idea of living in a tent leads us straight back to the Old Testament, to the Tent that housed the Ark of the Covenant, the divine presence made visible in a 'pillar of cloud' and expressed by the Hebrew word *Shekinah*, the dwelling place, a technical term in rabbinic theology for God's presence dwelling among His people.

The flesh of Jesus Christ is the new locus of contact between the Father and those men among whom it is His delight to dwell. It thus replaces the ancient Tabernacle. The Gospel will present Jesus as the replacement of the Temple (Jn 2:19-22), which is a variation of the theme.

John's choice of the Greek word *skenoun* was certainly inspired by the Hebrew *Shekinah*, as the two terms are not only very similar in meaning but have the same three root-consonants (especially perceptible to a Semitic ear), and are not unlike in sound.

Saint John uses this word several times but only for God's dwelling. One instance is to be found in the lesson read at the Mass of the Dedication of a

Church, which in the Knox version reads: "Here is God's tabernacle (*skene*) pitched among men; he will dwell (*skenosei*) with them" (Rev 21:3).

We are familiar with the Feast of the Tabernacles or Booths, called also with a Greek word *Scenopegia* (or tent-fixing), and referred to in Saint John's Gospel (7:2). This eight-day harvest thanksgiving festival, during which the Jews lived in shelters made of branches, reminded them of the time when their ancestors dwelt in tents after their departure from Egypt.

10. Symbolism of Tent and Ark

When our Lord died on the cross, a significant event occurred in the temple: "And all at once, the veil of the temple was torn this way and that from the top to the bottom" (Mt 27:51). It was a symbol of the changed conditions of man's relationship to God; there was no longer a barrier, a veil holding mankind back from the divine presence; heaven was now open to all without distinction. What the sacrifices of the old law could not accomplish Jesus obtained through the shedding of His blood on the cross. The tabernacle of the Christian people is the heavenly tabernacle, a greater and more complete tabernacle, which human hands never fashioned, which does not belong to this order of creation at all (Heb 9:11). Even the solitary act of entry of the high-priest into the Holy of Holies could win only ritual purity for the people; whereas the blood of Jesus cleansed man's soul from sin and won for all men

As the Old Testament offers the shadows cast by future events, the reality being found in Christ (Col 2:17), the Fathers of the Church have regarded the Ark of the Covenant as a symbol of the New Law. Christ is the true Bread of Life (manna), the High Priest of the New Testament (Aaron's rod), the supreme Lawgiver (the tables of the Law).

The incarnation of the Word rendered God personally and visibly present to mankind; it was no longer a presence unseen and awe-inspiring as in the Tent and Temple. God is truly present in His Church, Christ is with His Mystical Body to the end of time; in the Holy Eucharist Christ is truly and substantially present among the people of His choice.

11. Mary the Ark

The next natural step was the extension of the Ark symbolism to Our Lady. Of all the titles given to the Blessed Virgin in the classical litany of Loreto, one of the most beautiful is undoubtedly that of *Foederis Arca*, Ark of the Covenant. It is also one of those that have the best scriptural authority.

Mary is the Ark of the New Covenant between God and man. She was called *Arca*, by Saint Ambrose, Saint Ephrem and others; *Foederis Arca* was first employed apparently by Richard of Saint Victor in the twelfth century.

Many of the typical features contained in the Ark, say the Doctors of the Church of both East

and West and many ascetical writers, find their fulfilment in the Mother of God. In the incorruptibility of the wood of the Ark they see Mary's freedom of all corruption of sin and death. The gold used for the adornment of the Ark typifies the richness of Mary's endowments of body and soul. Through her divine motherhood Mary became the depository of the proofs of God's eternal love for men and His unchangeable will that all should be saved. She bore within herself, not the tablets of the law, but the Lawgiver Himself. The body and blood, which she gave to her divine Son, became in due course of time the true bread of life, the antitype of the desert manna. What the Ark of the Covenant was for Israel, Mary is in an unmeasurably higher degree for the new People of God.

Elizabeth, the Precursor's mother, when expressing her astonishment at the Mother of her Lord visiting her, was but echoing king David's words when, after capturing Mount Zion, he expressed awe and wonderment at receiving the much-travelled Ark of the Covenant: "How shall I give shelter to the Lord's ark?" (2 Sam 6:9).

John's prophetic vision of the Ark of the Covenant being made patent in the heavenly temple points clearly to Mary's being taken up bodily to heaven to share in the glory of her Son, as was testified by Pope Pius XII in his Apostolic Constitution on Mary's Assumption.

IV. THE ARK IN WORSHIP

12. The Focal Point of Hebrew Worship

The Ark of the Covenant, like the Tent of Meeting, was part of the Hebrew worship in the desert and later for a period in the Promised Land. The Ark, in fact, was the centre of all the religious aspirations and experiences in the idolless cult of the chosen people, both in the mobile Tabernacle during their nomadic wanderings south of the land of Canaan, and then in the Temple of Solomon at Jerusalem until this was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar's armies.

The gods that men naturally worship are gods accessible to the mind and imagination, who can be represented in sensible form. To Israel it was revealed that God is transcendent, He is not on the same plane as the objects of man's normal experience, His name is ineffable, and His person is not to be identified with any object of visible experience. Indeed the non-representation of God is the best way of conceiving Him—He is utterly unlike anything that we know.

However, human nature does need some visible object as a focus of its worship; and to satisfy this need without endangering the principle of non-representation, Israel had its Ark. It was the symbol of Yahweh's presence, it was His footstool; between the Cherubim He sat enthroned.

The Ark occupied the most sacred and secret

place of the Sanctuary, and it was seen only by the High-Priest on special occasions. All public religious services took place in the Tabernacle court, which was open to the sky, and the portable sanctuary became both the focal point of communal worship and a symbol of religious unity.

The Levites of the house of Kohath were delegated to carry the Ark and the sacred vessels of the Tabernacle whenever the Israelites shifted their encampment.

Historians are not nearly so certain of the course of events during the Exodus as the film makers of Hollywood seem to be.

13 . Towards a Christian Liturgy

To any reader of the relevant chapters of Exodus it becomes soon apparent how much the plans of Solomon's Temple—and the two that followed it—owed to the designs of the Tent of Meeting and the Ark of the Testimony as given by God to Moses. Again, the Tent and the Ark, through the Temple of Jerusalem, have exercised a considerable influence on the principles governing the structure of our Houses of God with all their appurtenances and in the formation of our Christian Liturgy.

Ever since His Ascension the God-Man, Emmanuel, has contrived to live among us in a thoroughly localized way. To establish this continuity, to recall how God pitched his tent among the Israelites, the Church builds her

churches. More than that, the Church still calls the dwelling place of the Blessed Eucharist the Tabernacle or tent. To help our imagination, she even recommends that the structure, covered with a rich veil or canopy hanging all around in graceful folds, should by its very appearance resemble a peaked tent or domed pavilion.

So God in His marvellous mercy has dogged our footsteps—with the Jews as they wandered through the desert; with the Apostles as they tramped the roads of Palestine; with us, His new Israel, as we flock around His tent. For the Christian people the Ark of the Covenant has been superseded by Jesus who is the Temple wherein “dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col 2:9; Jn 1:19-22).

14. Note on Timber

Many of the fittings of the Tabernacle—the Ark, the table, the boards, the bars and pillars and the copper-covered altar—were made of acacia wood or *settim*.

This contrasts with the variety of woods—cypress, cedar and olive—used by Solomon in the construction of the Temple of Jerusalem. Two species of *settim*—which the Septuagint version translated as *aseptos* or “incorruptible”—abound in the otherwise barren wadis of the Sinai desert. Egyptians, Herodotus informs us (ii, 96), used *settim* wood for making ships, furniture and statues. The tree reaches a height of 25 feet, with an umbrella-like spread of branches somewhat greater.

Its timber is extremely hard, close-grained and insect-resisting, and—an important consideration for an object that had to be carried long distances on men's shoulders—light. Flavius Josephus (*Antiq. Jud.* iii, 6, 5) speaks of its strength and durability. Certain species yield the gum arabic of commerce.

15. Note on Cherubim

Since Yahweh could not permit His people to worship Him under an external representation, because of the danger of idolatry to which a sensible image might lead simple people in pagan idolatrous surroundings, He devised the Ark as the place above which His presence would in some mysterious manner be localized, and in such a way that the Ark represented the footstool of His royal throne.

The only concession Yahweh made in this matter of visible representation was the figure of two cherubim fastened on top of the Ark of the Covenant. The tent hangings and the inner veil were also adorned with embroidered cherubim. These, anyway, would render little encouragement to the people's idolatrous tendency, as the common people never entered the innermost recesses of the Tabernacle.

In the Bible, Cherubim (the plural of the Hebrew *Cherub*) function as guardian spirits of sacred places and as throne-bearers or lackeys, and not, strictly speaking, as angels or God's messengers to men.

The cherubim of the Ark were probably in human form, but with wide-spread wings, like the winged sphinxes of Syro-Phoenician iconography. In Babylon and Assyria similar statues of mythological creatures, called *karibu* whence the Hebrew *cherub*), have been found, which have the head of a man, the body of a lion, the feet of an ox, and the wings of an eagle, and were used as tutelary divinities to guard the entrances of palaces and temples. Similar images may be found in Bombay at the entrance of Parsi temples.

Cherubs are mentioned for the first time in the story of Adam and Eve, as guardians, flaming sword in hand, of the gates of Paradise (Gen 3:24).

In Solomon's Temple two large standing Cherubs faced the entrance of the Holy of Holies keeping watch over the Ark (1 Kings 6:23-28).

In Ezekiel's vision (1:10-14) the cherubs are represented as ministering spirits and bearers of God's throne. Following the Assyro-Babylonian symbolism, he represents them as having human hands, four wings and four faces (a human face symbolizing intelligence, that of a lion indicating courage and sovereignty, that of an ox figuring strength, and that of an eagle signifying vision and speed). With slight foundation Christian art and the liturgy have seen in these four animals a symbol of the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, in this order.

The Temple of Jerusalem

I. SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

1. The Temple and the Church

Among the various figures used by Holy Scripture to represent God's Kingdom, and mentioned in number six of the Constitution on the Church of the Second Vatican Council, there is one, taken from architecture, by which the Church is called a structure of God's design.

“The Lord compared Himself to the stone which the builders rejected but which was made into the corner-stone. Upon that foundation the Church is built by the Apostles, and from it derives solidity and stability. This structure has been given many names: God's house in which dwells His family; God's spiritual dwelling-place; God's tabernacle among men. It has been

called especially the holy *temple* which, symbolized by sacred buildings made of stone, is sung by the Holy Fathers and is aptly compared by the liturgy to the holy City, the new Jerusalem."

If the Tent of the Testimony that contained the Ark of the Covenant was the germ from which the Temple of Jerusalem sprouted, this Temple was the forerunner of our Christian churches which were to be a figure of Christ's Church itself.

2. The Three Temples

In the Old Testament there were, one after another, two temples dedicated to Yahweh in Jerusalem. The original temple, the most magnificent of all, was built by king Solomon. This was plundered and burnt down by the Babylonians when they captured Jerusalem in 587 B.C.

The second temple was that erected by Zerubabel, when the Jews returned from the Babylonian exile fifty years later. This lasted for five centuries until Herod the Great in 20 B.C. decided to pull down the already dilapidated structure and put up a new one of cyclopean proportions. Work on the surrounding buildings was still in progress during our Lord's public life. This third temple, Herod's temple, was razed to the ground during the siege and capture of Jerusalem by the Roman legions in A.D. 70.

3 . *David and Solomon*

The creation of a permanent "house" for Yahweh, to take the place of the movable tabernacle, was king David's desire and plan. In fact, he prepared detailed designs for the building and furnishings, he collected construction materials, and amassed the gold ingots which were to be used for the sacred objects. He assembled the teams of workmen and craftsmen, and fixed the various classes and functions of the priests and Levites who were to perform the divine services.

David, however, was too much preoccupied by his wars and had shed too much blood. The honour of building the temple was reserved by the Lord for David's son, Solomon, who would be a man of peace (2 Sam 7:1-7, 13; 1 Chron 22:8-10).

Solomon's plans were ambitious. Neither the trained workmen nor all the necessary materials required for the project were available in Palestine. After 150,000 Israelites were conscribed to provide the bulk of the labour force, the king concluded an agreement with Hiram, king of Tyre, according to which Hiram was to provide not only hard and durable timber of cedar and cypress, but skilled workmen, among them lumbermen from the Lebanon, Phoenician sailors to float the wood by raft to an Israelite port, carpenters, masons and stone-dressers to be recruited from Gabal-Byblos, whence from the third millennium before Christ Egypt had drawn its supplies. It was agreed that in exchange Solomon would supply corn, oil and food-stuffs to Phoenicia (1 Kings 5).

In his *In the Steps of the Master*, H. V. Morton tells us how Barclay some 100 years ago discovered by chance, near the Damascus Gate, Solomon's Quarry, or the Royal Caverns as Josephus calls it, which is said to have provided the snow-white stone for Solomon's Temple nine hundred years before Christ.

When visiting those subterranean cathedrals, the author says, he first understood the meaning and the accuracy of the writer of the books of Kings when, describing the building of the House of the Lord, he wrote: "At the time the temple was a-building the stones used were ready-hewn and shaped, so that there was no ringing of hammer or axe or iron tool in the house itself, while it was being built" (1 Kings 6:7).

But why should the inspired writer have stressed the obvious fact that distant quarrying could not be heard inside the Temple? Obviously the point of the verse is that the stone with which Solomon built the Temple was "prefabricated" and came from excavations that ran beneath the Old City almost beneath the Temple, near the present Damascus Gate, *yet not a soul heard the cutting of the stones!*

4. Description of the Buildings

The plan of the building corresponded to the Israelite idea of God's holiness. Just as God was holy, that is to say, "cut off" from the human world, so anything associated with him was cut off from profane use. Let us remember that the word

“profane” meant for the Romans an area which was not sacred, the place that lay in front or outside the *fanum* or temple. Any holy place, any place associated with God, was surrounded by an area of holiness. So was the whole of Mount Sinai when God appeared there; the Israelites were told not to set foot on it, lest they should die (Exod 19: 12-13). The whole mountain had been cordoned off and declared a prohibited area.

Solomon’s temple was composed of precincts and courts endowed with increasing degrees of holiness.

In spite of the very detailed information supplied by the sacred text (1 Sam 6-7 and 2 Chron 3-4), which seems to have been drawn from the architect’s plans, the reconstruction of a model of the Temple is still in many respects a matter of conjecture, since the specifications are at times difficult to interpret, and not a stone of the glorious building is to be found.

The Temple was a long rectangular building open on one of its shorter sides. The interior was divided into three parts: a porch, a large hall for worship called the Holy Place, and lastly the Holy of Holies reserved to the Ark of the Covenant.

The structure was surrounded by two courts. The inner court, called the court of the priests, contained the altar of the holocausts, and was enclosed by a wall of hewn stone, covered with cedar wood. The outer and larger court enclosed Solomon’s palace and other royal buildings.

Solomon completed the building operations in seven years (1 Kings 6:38). According to the sacred text, the stone-cutters employed were 80,000, all supervised by 550 chiefs and 3,300 subordinates.

The temple was the scene of more than one critical event in the history of Judah. Its treasures were emptied several times to satisfy the rapacity of foreign invaders or to buy alliances (1 Kings 14:26; 15:28; 2 Kings 12:18; 16:8). The infant king Jehoash was hidden in the priests' apartments for six years from the murderous intentions of queen Athaliah (2 Kings 11:3).

This Solomonic temple stood in its rich magnificence for 375 years until 586 B.C. when it was looted and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon (2 Kings 25:9), as Jeremiah had predicted.

The prophet Ezekiel was among the captive Jews carried away to Babylon. In exile he was granted a vision of the future restoration of the idealized Jerusalem and of the rebuilding of the Lord's Temple (Ezekl 33-38). His minute description of the ideal temple, called at times the Temple of Ezekiel, is only of indirect historic interest, as it was never built.

II. THE TEMPLE OF ZERUBBABEL

5. Back from Exile

The second temple, the post-exilic temple, is generally known as the Temple of Zerubbabel, one of the leaders of the forty-two thousand men and seven thousand slaves who returned to Palestine after the Babylonian captivity.

After the collapse of the Assyrian power and the capture of Babylon by the Persian king Cyrus in 539 B.C., the whole Near East breathed a sigh of relief. The most benefited by the new regime were the Jewish exiles.

The first book of Ezra opens by relating that Cyrus wished to proclaim his personal piety towards Yahweh: "A message from Cyrus, king of Persia: The Lord God of heaven has made me master of the world, and now he will have me rebuild his own temple for him at Jerusalem, a city of Judea."

Cyrus authorized the Jews to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the Temple there at the expense of the royal exchequer. All the gold and silver vessels and furnishings, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried off as booty, were to be restored to the Jews.

Having returned to the homeland under the leadership of Zerubbabel, of David's royal family, the Jews, at the urging of the prophets Aggai and Zechariah, soon undertook rebuilding the Temple.

They had hardly laid the foundations, when the Samaritans, whose co-operation had been refused, succeeded in hindering the progress of the work. After some twenty years of building operations the temple was finally ready for dedication in 516 B.C.

6. *The Second Temple*

Though little is known about this second temple, it would seem that it was of the same dimensions as that of Solomon, though far less rich and magnificent. The older generation of returned exiles, which had seen the former temple, wept at the sight of its humble successor, which was 'like nothing in their eyes' in comparison (Hag 2:4).

In 168 B.C. the temple was desecrated by Antiochus IV (surnamed Epiphanes or "God Made Manifest"), the Hellenistic king of Syria, who dedicated it to Zeus as a pagan temple. The Jews submitted with bitter but muffled protests, until they heard that Antiochus had died. Then they erupted, banishing every vestige of Hellenism, including some of their own corrupted priests, from the holy precincts. But Antiochus was not dead, and the rigours of his reaction sparked outright revolt. What followed was a 25-year struggle, known to history as the Maccabean War. In the course of it they recovered the temple from the invaders and rededicated it to Yahweh. They regained their nationhood and sense of destiny, and remained independent for a while.

All this time the Holy of Holies was empty, for

the Ark of the Covenant had disappeared when Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, and has not been reported since. When in 63 B.C. Pompey captured Jerusalem, he entered the Temple and the Holy of Holies, and, according to Tacitus, he found that the place stood empty with no symbolic representation of the deity, and that the innermost shrine had nothing to reveal. (*Romanorum primus Cn. Pompeius Iudaeos domuit templumque iure victoriae ingressus est: inde vulgatum nulla intus deum effigie vacuum sedem et inania arcana. — Hist. v, 9*).

The Jewish historian Josephus assures us that the Roman general respected the sanctuary and did not touch the treasury, which was estimated at 20,000 talents (*Antiq. Iud. xiv, 4, 4*). No one could have foreseen that the end of the second temple was at hand, and that the founder of the Idumean dynasty would give his name to a grandiose reconstruction inspired by ambition rather than by religious fervour.

7. Temple Psalms

For the Jews the Temple of Jerusalem, the House of the Lord, the symbol of the presence of Yahweh among His people, was the centre of national unity and the magnet that attracted the soul of every devout Israelite. The great feasts of the Tabernacles, the Passover and Pentecost saw as many as 100,000 pilgrims gathered in David's City.

The book of Psalms is often called "the hymn

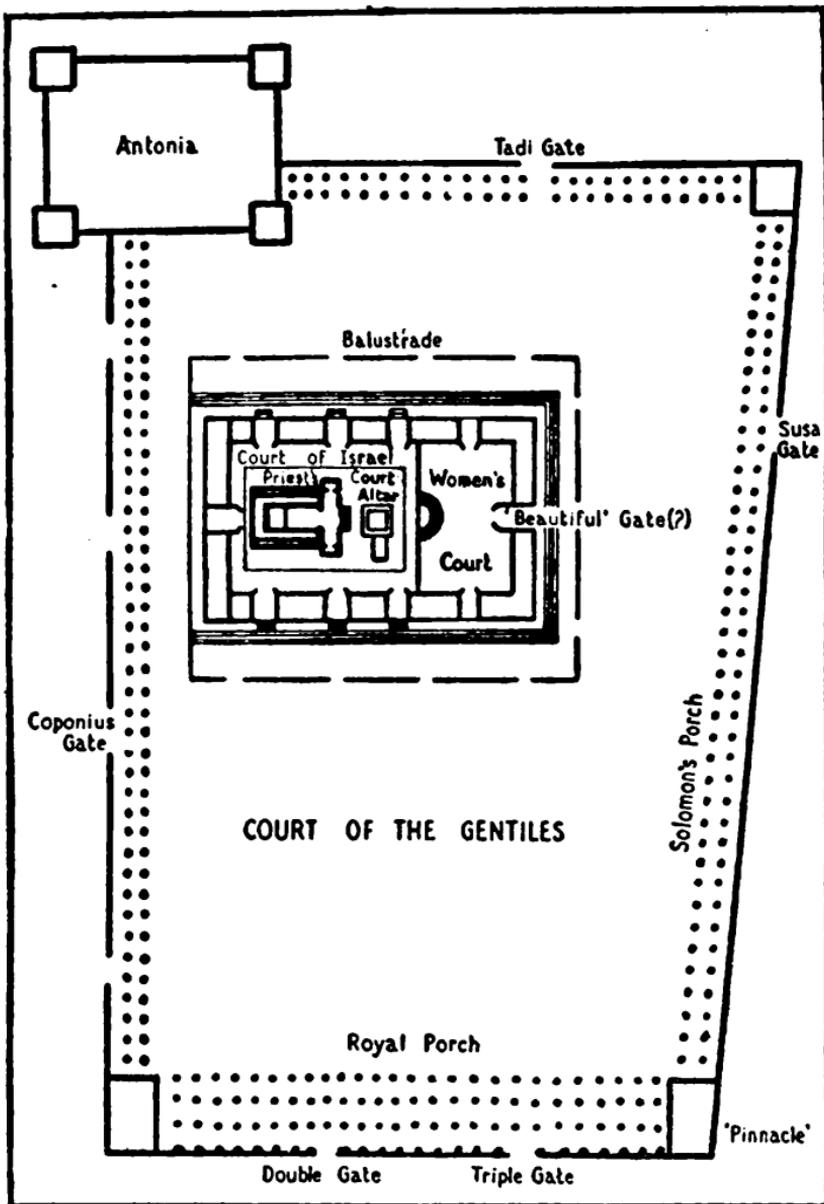
book of the second Temple". There is no better way to enter into the life of post-exilic Judaism than to read and meditate upon this devotional literature, which was well known to the worshipping Jew and which has nourished the life and thought of the Christian Church.

The Songs of Ascent (gradual psalms 120-134) express the feelings of these pilgrims as they came nearer to the Holy City and the Temple for the great religious festivals. In these short lyric poems the Psalmist betrays an exilic and post-exilic background. His heart is brimming with joy at the very thought of going up to the House of Yahweh. It is the joy that the traveller feels, worn out by his wanderings in a foreign land, or the joy of the prisoner about to exchange the sufferings of the dungeon for the delights of home and family.

If there is a psalm which unmistakably speaks of the Temple memories during the Babylonian captivity, this is psalm 137, which begins, "Upon the rivers of Babylon". It was composed during or soon after the exile. Gathered together on the banks of Babylon's streams, the captives, with tears in their eyes, remember the Lord's City and the Lord's House. Their musical instruments, that once accompanied their psalmody in the Temple, now hang silent on the poplar trees along the Tigris and Euphrates. How can they sing a hymn to Yahweh in a strange land among unbelievers! Cursed be the hand and the tongue of any Israelite exile who should forget Zion!

And to single out but one more Temple psalm,

expressing the passionate love of the pilgrim for the House of the Lord, in psalm 84, "How lovely are thy tabernacles", the poet considers those truly fortunate who live near the Temple or who can go up to Jerusalem. In a highly poetic flight of phantasy, he envies the privilege of the sparrows and swallows that undisturbed can nest in the Temple courts. Would that he could make the Lord's House his own home were it only for a day, for one day spent in God's House is worth a thousand spent elsewhere.



Plan of Herod's Temple

III. THE TEMPLE OF HEROD

8. *What a structure!*

The Temple of Herod is the one of the Gospels and Acts, the one in which Jesus and the Apostles prayed and preached. It was one of the architectural wonders of the world.

One evening, during the last week of His mortal life, as He was leaving His Father's House, Jesus was making His way beside the substructures of the temple are, which rose along the valley of the Kidron and presented a magnificent spectacle. The disciples, recalling our Lord's prediction about the destruction of the Holy City, were all admiration for the solidity and massiveness of the noble masonry. One of them, as though to sound the Master's mind, approached Him casually and began to praise the vast proportions of the edifice: "Look, Master, what stones! What a fabric! Jesus answered him, Do you see all this huge fabric? There will be no stone of it left on another; it will all be thrown down" (Mk 13:1-2).

The enthusiasm shown by the disciples is reminiscent of the vivid description by Josephus of the Temple of Herod as viewed from the Kidron side:

"The lower temple precincts, where their foundation was lowest, had to be supported by walls three hundred cubits (about 450 feet) high. In the building of the foundation there

were used stones forty cubits in length. The porticos were all double and supported by columns twenty-five cubits tall, all monoliths of pure white marble. Their natural magnificence, their polish and arrangement made them a wonderful sight to behold" *Wars of the Jews, v, 188*).

9. Herod the Great

Herod the Great is known in history for his tyrannical rule and for his ambitious building programme.

To stabilize his tottering throne, on which he had been placed by the Roman senate at the suggestion of Antony and Octavian, he put to death the entire family of the Hasmoneans, including his own wife Mariamne. Her three sons followed her to the grave, and so did five other sons of his, born of various unions. "It is safer to be Herod's pig (*hys*) than his son (*huios*)", said Augustus by way of a punning joke; for, obedient to at least this scriptural precept, the master of the Jews would not eat pork.

In the light of Herod's bloodthirsty character and jealousy over any pretenders or potential rivals to the throne, the massacre of the Holy Innocents finds historical confirmation.

Herod the Great had some titles to greatness. Politically his reign was generally peaceful and externally prosperous. Through successive grants.

of Mark Antony and Augustus, his kingdom was expanded from the original limits of Judea proper to include Idumea, Samaria, Galilee, Perea and the ancient territory of Bashan. When a disastrous earthquake in 31 B.C. killed 30,000 people, Herod showed himself generous in assisting the survivors.

Herod had a penchant for building. He was the founder of the new Hellenistic cities of Sebaste, Caesarea, Antipatris and Phasaelia. He gave the name Herodium to two fortresses, and built the fortress Antonia next to the Temple, Machaerus in Transjordan, and Masada by the Dead Sea; he erected temples in honour of Augustus at Caesarea Philippi and Sebaste; he contributed to the construction of temples, theatres and streets even outside his territory and as far as the island of Rhodes. In Jerusalem he built his own palace, a theatre, an amphitheatre and a hippodrome.

In a Jerusalem transformed by imposing architectural creations of every kind, the humble postexilic Temple, the shabbiness of which the modest restorations of the Maccabees had failed to conceal, cut a poor figure indeed. Motivated by his taste for magnificence as well as by a secret desire to gain Jewish support, Herod conceived the bold idea of giving to the national sanctuary an amplitude and sumptuousness which would rival the traditional glory of Solomon's Temple.

The mighty undertaking was begun in the eighteenth year of Herod's reign, 20 B.C. Although the essential structure was completed in ten years, work went on, with various interruptions, until

A.D. 64. This explains the words addressed to Jesus by the Jews: "This temple took forty-six years to build; wilt thou raise it up in three days?" (Jn 2:20). We may notice in passing the importance of these words to establish the chronology of the life of Christ.

10. The Wailing Wall

This was the greatest of all Herod's architectural achievements. The temple area was almost twice that of the court of the earlier temple. This was effected by building up an embankment reinforced by the thick walls which the disciples admired. Even today twenty-five courses of stone-work are still extant, fourteen of which may be seen on the external surface of the western wall, known also as "the Wailing Wall".

This massive structure, 48 metres long and 18 metres high, was for centuries a place of pilgrimage for pious Jews, who used to make their way to it from all lands of the Diaspora, in order to pour out their prayers and lamentations before it and kiss its sacred stones, which were for them the sole surviving symbol of the ravaged glories of their Temple and a visible reminder of its utter destruction.

In recent months, after the Israeli-Arab conflict, we have all seen in newspapers and magazines photographs of soldiers and civilians praying and reciting passages from the Old Testament before the solitary but eloquent witness of the glory that was the Temple of Herod.

“How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow has she become!” was Jeremiah’s opening pathetic lament after the destruction of the original temple. Many generations later, when the city and the temple were again levelled to the ground by a foreign foe, Jerusalem was once more likened in Rabbinical *haggadah* to a deserted and lonely woman sobbing over the tragedy of her widowhood. On the golden coin struck by Vespasian to commemorate his capture of Jerusalem in the year 70, and bearing the legend *Judaea Capta*, Judea is also symbolically depicted as a dejected sorrowing widow, seated at the foot of a palm-tree, her hands bound behind her back, while the triumphant emperor leans on his spear above her. An unchivalrous representation that carried the shame of Jewry to the farthest bounds of the empire and beyond. One of the present day Israeli coins—the 10-agorot—shows on its obverse a seven-branched palm tree with two clusters of dates.

11. Temple Walls and Halls

The whole temple area, almost rectangular in form, was surrounded by a high wall approximately 525 yards by 330 yards. A number of gates opened into the outer court, called the *Court of the Gentiles*, where non-Jews could gain admission. Here took place the scene of the adulterous woman being dragged before Jesus for judgment. This spacious enclosure was surrounded on all four sides by porches. The royal porch on the south consisted in a quadruple colonnade of 162

Corinthian columns forming three aisles. Along the eastern side was the Portico of Solomon, where Jesus spoke to the Jews on the feast of the Dedication (Jn 10:23), Peter preached after the curing of the lame beggar (Acts 3:11), and the first Christians were accustomed to meet (Acts 5:12).

This was the court with its covered galleries which rang with the arguments of the doctors of the Law and the cries of the sellers of doves for the sacrifices. Here money-changers put up their booths to offer the pilgrims ritually clean shekels for their pagan currency. There was a continual din, and just at hand, by the gates, the sellers of sacrificial animals kept their lowing and bleating merchandise. This explains the well-known incident of an angered Christ expelling the merchants from His Father's House (Mk 11:15-16).

The pinnacle of the temple, mentioned in connection with Christ's temptation by the devil (Mt 4:5), was most probably the south-east angle of the outer wall. This point overlooked the Kidron valley some hundred yards below, and Josephus states that anyone standing there would become dizzy. It was from this point that James, the "brother of the Lord", was thrown down and killed in the year 62.

In the corner diametrically opposed to this point, a flight of steps led up to the fortress Antonia, where a Roman garrison was stationed to keep guard over the temple area. From these steps Paul addressed the Jewish people after he had narrowly escaped lynching at the hands of his

fellow countrymen (Acts 21:35, 40). A tradition, which cannot be traced back further than the twelfth century, makes this castle the place of Pilate's praetorium at the time of the Passion.

12. The Inner Courtyards

Within this large Court of the Gentiles bounded by magnificent porticos, there stood the Temple proper, enclosed by another stone balustrade, running from east to west and standing on a higher platform.

At the various entrances into this inner court there were signboards with Latin and Greek notices of the type: "No thoroughfare. Trespassers will be prosecuted." Only members of the Jewish commonwealth could proceed any further. Two of these inscriptions were discovered in this century. One, that came to light in the course of excavations carried out by the Palestine Department of Antiquities in 1936, says in Greek: "Strangers are forbidden to pass the barrier and enter the precincts of the sanctuary. Anyone found doing so will himself be responsible for the death penalty which will be inflicted on him." The severe warning seemed to mean that if the infuriated crowd killed the trespasser, it would be his own fault. This explains the scene in which the Apostle Paul was charged with having brought Greeks into the Temple, thus profaning the holy place (Acts 21:28). It is also possible, someone has said, that the notice was written in the spirit of the warning sign attached to a fence post on a Spanish

farm in which young bulls were being reared: "Beware of the bulls. Survivors will be prosecuted."

Within the barrier, the holy place was divided into distinct areas reserved respectively, from east to west, for women, men, and finally priests. The main gate on the eastern side, with high doors of bronze imported from Corinth, is probably referred to in Acts (3:2) as the 'Beautiful Gate', where the crippled man was begging for alms "from those who went into the sanctuary". It was (if our calculations are correct) about 75 feet high and 60 feet wide.

The *Women's Court* was so called, not because men were excluded from it, but because women could go no further in. Within this court there was the treasury (Jn 8:20) and thirteen chests or coffers to receive contributions for the temple. Here the poor widow was seen by our Lord offering two mites "of her poverty" (Mk 12:41).

A flight of fifteen curved steps led up to the *Men's Court* or court of the Israelites, to which access was gained by the famous Nicanor Gate. This particularly magnificent gate—twenty men were required to turn it on its hinges—was a gift of an Alexandrian Jew, who had vowed to offer it to the Temple during a shipwreck. Here most probably, at the steps before the gate, the Blessed Virgin presented the Child Jesus and placed Him in the hands of old Simeon. Women and others who did not wish to go farther in could see, through its wide arch, what was happening in the priests' court in the immediate vicinity of the

altar. In this court took their stand the Levites, singers and musicians, as well as the Israelites who represented the nation at the sacrifices (Lk 1:10). Finally this is the place where the Pharisee of the parable may have been visualized by our Lord as standing to pray; the publican, who



*The Seven-Branched
Golden Lampstand*



The Altar of Incense



The Sea of Molten Brass

considered himself equal to the heathen, would not dare to cross the threshold of this court.

The Court of the Priests was separated from the men's court by a stone wall hardly two feet high. Within this enclosure stood the altar of burnt offerings, about 75 feet square and 22 feet high. Around the altar destined for sacrifice, eight pillars from which the animals were hung while being flayed, and eight marble tables on which the carcasses were washed for the altar. Abundant water was stored in the "brazen sea", which was fed from the pools of Solomon. The place, some have noted, resembled rather a butcher's slaughter house. To a twentieth-century mind the gruesome accompaniments of the sacrificial system are revolting, but antiquity knew no such disgust. This was the means ordained by God for the reconciliation of his people to Himself. Sacrifice had to be accompanied by prayer, confession of one's guilt and restitution for the wrong done. All this preserved sacrifice from being a mere formality, and prepared the world for a worthier and everlasting Sacrifice.

13 . *The Temple Proper*

The Temple proper, situated on still higher ground, was reached by means of twelve steps. The Temple building itself was comparatively small: 90 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 45 feet high, with a porch at the front. Two richly ornamented bronze columns flanked the entrance.

In building the Temple Herod had adhered to

Solomon's plans, although he enriched it after the Greek fashion. It was built of huge blocks of masonry, and was gilded inside and outside.

It has been remarked that the entire sacred area, including all the various courts, is in the Gospels always termed *to hieron*, the holy place, the House of Yahweh (Mt 4:5), as distinguished from the covered Temple or place of worship rising in its midst, *ho naos* (Mt 27:51). Jesus teaches in the holy place, but will "destroy" the Temple, the veil of which was rent in twain at His death.

The Vulgate, however, has translated the two Greek terms always by the same word *templum*. So have Douay and Knox given as "temple" in either case; so, too, versions made directly from the Greek as Spencer, Revised Standard, the New English Bible, Rieu. Of those we have seen, only Kleist and J.B. Phillips have made an attempt at distinction by consistently translating the former word as "temple" or "temple halls", and the latter as "sanctuary" or "temple sanctuary".

This sanctuary is the one referred to by our Lord in his eschatological discourse on the destruction of Jerusalem. "When you see that which the prophet Daniel called the abomination of desolation, set up in the holy place...." (Mt 24:15). Daniel's prophecy (Dan 9:27) was verified in 168 B.C. by the conduct of the hellenizing tyrant Antiochus, who set up in the temple an idol and an altar to Olympian Zeus (1 Mac 1:57; 5:7; 2 Mac 5:2). Our Lord hints at a repetition of such sacrilege, and the warning would be recognized as

a sign of the times by the Christians when in A.D. 68, John of Gischala, the leader of the Zealots, took possession of the sanctuary to make it his fortress, and turned the Holy Place into a lake of blood. It is also possible that the reference is to the coming of the Roman army some months later with their profane standards into the city and temple.

14. *The Sanctuary*

The Sanctuary or *naos* built by Herod consisted, as that of Solomon, of three sections: a vestibule, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. The doorway leading to the *vestibule* was at one time surmounted by the Roman eagle with outspread wings.

The *Sanctum* or Holy Place contained the altar of incense, with the table of showbread on one side and the seven-branched lampstand on the other. Here the priest Zechariah was offering incense at the altar when the angel Gabriel appeared to him and announced the birth of John the Baptist (Lk 1:11). The massive ornamental candlestick the legions of Titus carried off as booty; it is to be seen carved on the triumphal Arch of Titus in the Roman forum. It has assumed a kind of symbolical value, it appears in Israeli postage stamps and the half-pound coins, and is still copied in small models, which are on sale all over Jerusalem at the present day.

The *Sancta Sanctorum* was divided from the *Sanctum* by a precious double curtain, the one

that was rent in two when Jesus died (Mt 27:51). This innermost shrine—a cube 30 feet on a side—was almost completely dark, perpetually silent, completely empty, its only feature being the stone on which the Ark of the Covenant had once stood. This absence of every image was in striking contrast to the other temples of the Mediterranean world, in which the innermost sanctuary almost always contained some image representing the deity in whose honour the temple had been built.

Only the high-priest once a year was allowed to enter that hallowed place, where face to face with the invisible presence of Yahweh, he offered incense and sprinkled the place with the blood of sin offerings to atone for the sins of the priesthood and people (Heb 9-10).



Relief of the Triumphal Arch of Titus in Rome

15 The Temple and the first Christians

In the first of his summary accounts of the flourishing state of the infant Church of Jerusalem, Luke says that the Christian community there “persevered with one accord, day by day, in the Temple worship, and as they broke bread in this house or that, took their share of food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God, and winning favour with all the people.” (Acts 2: 46-47).

It was probably this post-Pentecostal period Luke had in mind when in the very last verse of his Gospel he says that after the Ascension the disciples “went back full of joy to Jerusalem, where they spent their time continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God.”

Thus the third Gospel ends, as it had begun, in the Temple. Much had still to happen before the disciples were forced by circumstances to understand that the paths of the Church and Synagogue lay in different directions.

The opening chapters of Acts show us how much the Temple was part of the early days of the Church. Peter and John go up there at the hour of prayer. They and the other Apostles preach Jesus in the Temple area. Their favourite meeting place seems to have been Solomon's Portico.

In this attachment to the Temple the early Church had Christ's example. He taught there as a boy, and often later during his public ministry. Lack of respect for his Father's house aroused him to anger. He forbade the carrying of loads through

the Temple area. He did not condemn the Apostles for their pride in the magnificence of the Temple structure. In fact he wept over the sad fate soon to befall it.



16. *The End of the Temple*

As Jesus had foretold, the evil days came when Jerusalem, besieged and beleaguered on all sides, was to be destroyed so that not one stone remained upon another. A general insurrection broke out in A.D. 66, and a severe blockade by the Romans made resistance hopeless. It was at this time, it would seem, that the small Christian community took refuge at Pella in Transjordan. Zealots fought with each other and with more moderate groups for control of major fortresses. This striving for power in the city made the disaster inevitable. The Zealots who, under John of Gischala, occupied the Temple premises refused to surrender, but Titus' legions ruthlessly set fire to the woodwork of the holy place itself, and Herod's mighty temple, which had hardly been completed, went up in flames.

Thus did the third Temple of Jerusalem come to an end, never to rise again. The triumphal arch, which rises not far from the Colosseum and bears the name of Titus, has stood for nineteen centuries as a witness of the destruction of the Holy City. Despite isolated efforts for survival or for revival, Jerusalem had by the time of emperor Hadrian become a pagan city; the city of David was known as *Colonia Aelia Capitolina*.

Various buildings, of comparatively small size, have in successive later periods occupied part of the hallowed temple area. Here the three monotheistic religions of the world claim a common past in which, each in its different way, sought the one true God.

In the seventh century the Moslems built here the Dome of the Rock, wrongly called the Mosque of Omar. This octagonal mosque is today the chief structure rising in the vast temple site of 145,000 square metres. It was erected over the rock upon which Abraham is believed to have built an altar to sacrifice his son Isaak, and on which stood the Jewish altar of burnt-offering. It was from this summit, Muslims believe, that Prophet Mohammed soared to Allah's throne on his winged steed.

The Synagogue

I. THE INSTITUTION

1. Name and Origin

Synagoge is the Greek for "gathering place"; thus in the Septuagint text of Genesis 1:9, the water is gathered together into one *synagogè*. The word is used in classical Greek, in the Septuagint and in the New Testament for the place where people assemble. In the New Testament it refers generally to the religious meeting place of the Jews and, but rarely, to the religious meeting place of the Christians. In a transferred meaning the word is used for the religious meeting itself and for the congregation. The pagans, throughout whose territories many synagogues had arisen at the time of Jesus, quite rightly called these buildings prayer-halls or oratories (*proseuchai*) (Cfr. *Junenal, Sat, iii 96; Acts 16:13 Greek*).

The synagogue as a religious institution seems to have taken rise, under the inspiration of the priestly prophet Ezekiel, the priestly scribe Ezra and other leaders, at the time of the Babylonian captivity, when the Jews, hundreds of miles from their temple and its sacrifices, felt the need of meeting for common prayer, reading of the Mosaic Torah, and religious instruction. Thus we find the displaced Israelites in their colonies around Babylon and Susa holding meetings with the priests and scholars, with Levites, singers and musicians. Prayer and the reading of the sacred books alternated with psalmody and discussion. A religion, deprived of its temple and sacrificial institutions, was making a timid beginning of an institution that would develop into the synagogue of the future. In these meetings psalms of supplication with their pervasive yearning were improvised; Yahweh seemed absent from them, distant as their native land, but the dominant note was always one of noble confidence in ultimate salvation.

2. Construction and Furnishings

Even after the Jews had returned from Babylon and had rebuilt the Temple, the synagogue endured as an institution. In places that had a purely Jewish population, the synagogue was built by the city elders; in the Dispersion this was the concern of the Jewish community. A pious donor would at times defray the expenses. Such was the case in Capernaum, where the Roman

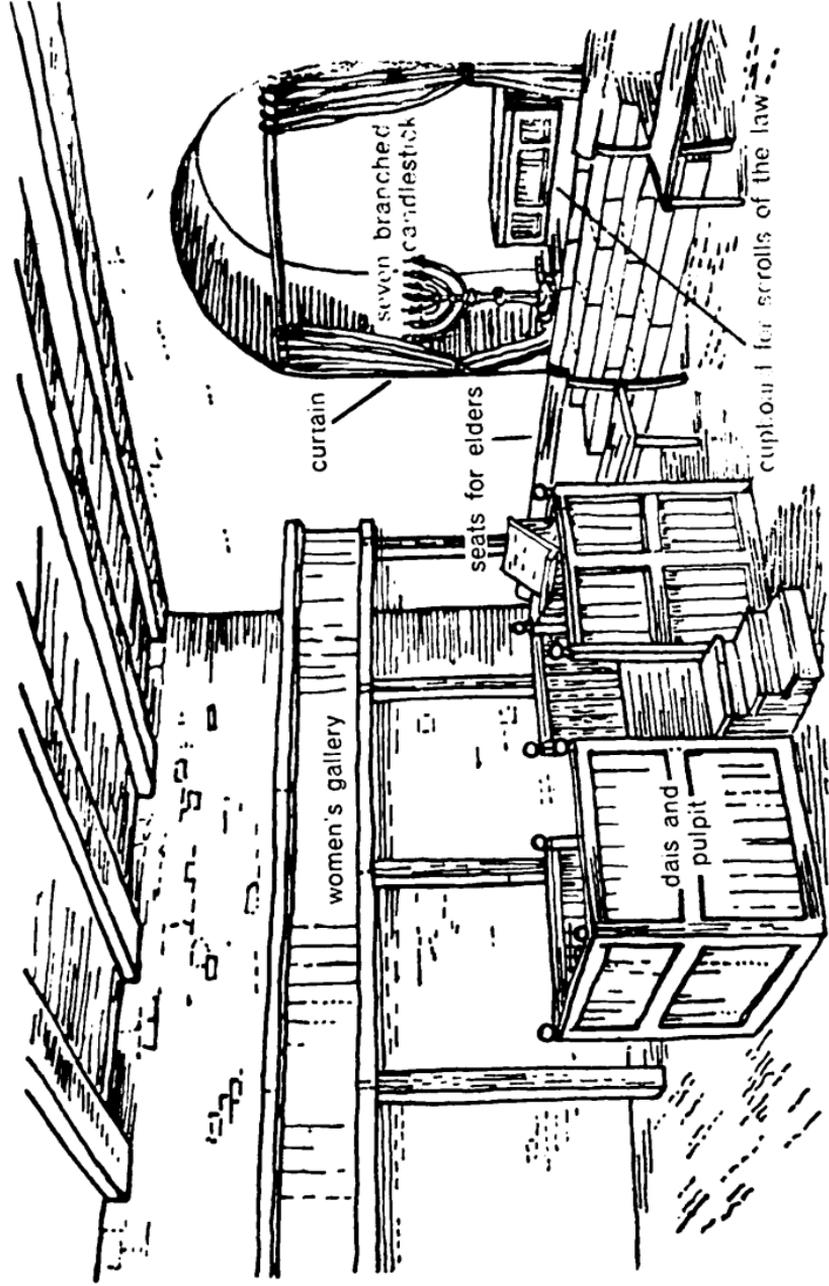
centurion, whose servant Jesus healed, had built the local synagogue out of his own pocket (Lk 7:5).

The remains of Palestinian synagogues, as revealed by archaeological excavations, show that synagogues were mostly built on a rectangular ground-plan, many of them in imitation of the Roman "basilica" type of building, having two rows of columns, which divided the interior into a central nave and two side aisles. Since the Jews stood at prayer facing Jerusalem (Dan 6:10), the synagogues were so orientated that the congregation would face the Holy City.

The rabbis liked to regard the synagogue as a miniature temple. The idea finds expression in the arrangements within the building, though as the synagogue was in no way a place of worship, it had no altar. The space where the biblical rolls were kept in a special cabinet was closed off with a curtain and called the "holy place". In the middle, near the repository of the sacred books, was a platform (the Hebrew *tebah*, Greek *bema*, Latin *ambo*) on which the reader and the preacher stood.

Seating accommodation was provided at least for the elders and the richer members of the congregation. The more honourable seats were nearer to the place where the holy books were kept. There was commonly a women's gallery.

The walls were generally bare and unadorned, though it is noteworthy that the third-century synagogue of Dura-Europos on the Euphrates



women's gallery

seats for elders

dais and pulpit

seven branched candlestick

curtain

caption for scrolls of the law

INTERIOR OF A SYNAGOGUE

contains a remarkable variety of frescos illustrating Old Testament scenes, the work apparently of a Jewish-Christian artist, thus marking an epoch in the origins of Christian art.

The synagogue was at once a church, a school and a law-court outside priestly control. Since the study of the Law was properly a religious act, instruction was ordinarily imparted to children in a room adjoining the main hall. Punishment ordered by the synagogue authorities was inflicted in the building, possibly in some adjacent room (Mt 10:17). Saint Paul confesses that before his conversion he beat the believers in every synagogue (Acts 22:19), and he himself was later thus treated five times (2 Cor 11:24).

The modern synagogue differs from its ancestral counterpart only in the increased number of its activities and the correspondent increase in the size of its physical plant. Up to the nineteenth century, a synagogue was often the gathering place for a community of fewer than 30 souls and would share the services of a rabbi with several others of similar size. Today, the tendency, particularly in the United States, is for a community of several hundred families to maintain a single synagogue with the services of a full-time rabbi, professional cantor and other professional personnel to direct its numerous activities, which include study and recreation programmes for the youth.

II. SYNAGOGUE SERVICES

3 . *Officials*

A board of elders managed the affairs of the synagogue and of the religious community which it represented (Lk 7:3-5). Special officers directed the worship, maintained order and looked after the temporalities. Chief among them was the ruler of the synagogue, or *archisynagogos*, who presided over the assembly, was responsible for the proprieties (Lk 13:14), and appointed or permitted suitable members to lead the prayers, read the Law and the Prophets, and exhort the congregation. In some synagogues several rulers were in office at once (Mk 5:22).

The services were not conducted by persons set apart for the duty, but by private members who had shown qualifications for it. Thus Jesus read the Scriptures in the synagogue of Nazareth (Lk 4:16), and he often taught in the synagogues (Mt 4:23). Paul and Barnabas were called on by the rulers of the synagogue of Antioch of Pisidia to give some words of encouragement to the congregation (Acts 13:15).

Among the synagogue rulers mentioned in the New Testament there is Jairus of Capernaum (Mk 3:22; 35-38), whose young daughter Jesus brought back to life, and Crispus of Corinth who, with all his household, believed in Christ (Acts 18:8) and whom Paul baptized personally (1 Cor 1:14).

Every synagogue had one or more attendants or *chazzans* (Lk 4:20), a sort of sacristan, in charge of the material equipment and of various minor services, such as bringing the Scripture rolls to the reader and replacing them in their repository, blowing the trumpet to announce the beginning of the Sabbath, administering the flogging to which public sinners were sentenced. The severest punishment was expulsion from the synagogue (Jn 9:22; 16:2) and consequently from the Jewish community:

4. *Religious Services*

The synagogue services were a 'second best' arrangement to satisfy the religious sentiment of the Israelites, in captivity or in the Diaspora, who could not make the pilgrimage to the Holy City, and of the whole chosen people when the House of the Lord had been destroyed.

With the destruction of the Temple, the synagogue (which was originally a school of instruction in the Law and Jewish traditions) broadened its scope. Religious assemblies were held in the morning of the Sabbath and feast days, and later also in major centres on Mondays and Thursdays. For the service the presence of ten adult males was required.

Custom had fixed the order of procedure. The assembly opened with the recitation of the *Shema*, which served as a profession of faith consisting of three Pentateuchal passages, and which is still central to Jewish piety (Deut 6:49; 11:13-21; Num

15:37-41). The congregation in a loud voice responded with the *Amen* that marked their souls' participation in the sacred reading and their agreement with its injunctions. The recitation of these texts was for the Israelite a solemn affirmation of his love for the one true God. When the Scribe asked Him which was the first commandment of the Law, Jesus answered by quoting the beginning of the *Shema* (Mk 12:29). A prayer followed consisting of eighteen petitions and benedictions that expressed sentiments of adoration, submission, trust and love of Yahweh.

The essence of the service was the public reading of a pericope from the Pentateuch and another from the Prophets (Lk 4:17). The Pentateuch was divided into 154 sections, so that the complete reading of it on consecutive Sabbaths took three years. Then came the reading of the Hebrew canonical prophets (from Joshua to the minor prophets) in which there was liberty of choice.

As the text was in Hebrew, a translation was often required into the current Aramaic by an interpreter called the *targumist*. An explanation of the Biblical passage and an exhortation (of which our homily is a lineal descendant) was then given by a competent speaker. There were some commentators of great repute, just as there are well-known preachers today, and they were in great demand in the synagogues. Jesus, and later Saint Paul (Acts 13:15), seem to have been among them. The meeting concluded with the blessing given in the book of Numbers (6:24-26), to which the people answered *Amen* (1 Cor 14:16).

III. RELATIONSHIP TO THE TEMPLE

5. Synagogue and Temple

The Synagogue was never intended to take the place of the one true and irreplaceable Temple of Jerusalem, but to confirm and extend the latter's influence while it remained standing, and partially to compensate for its loss when it had been destroyed. Hence the synagogue was not a shrine erected in competition with the Temple, but a sort of subsidiary religious and cultural institution run by laymen, without the complex organization of sacrifice and priesthood that characterized the Temple.

Though the Synagogue and the Temple were not rivals, yet the spirit of the two Jewish institutions was not the same. In the Temple we have a solemn liturgical ritual of sacrifices; in the Synagogue there is nothing but reading, instruction and prayers, for which no organized ritual was necessary. In a way, our Holy Mass is the blending of the two, as the Second Vatican Council has clearly demonstrated in its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy: the Liturgy of the Word of God, containing the history of salvation is inspired in the synagogue service; the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the only Sacrifice which establishes a true bond between God and man, offered not by sinful man alone but by God's own Son, is faintly foreshadowed by the sacrifices which God's people in the Old Dispensation offered for their sins in the temple of Jerusalem.

6. *One Temple, many Synagogues*

The synagogues established throughout the civilized world exercised a greater influence upon the religious conscience of the Jews than the Temple, the only centre of the Mosaic ritual.

The apostles and many of the early Christian preachers had an audience religiously prepared for the message they had to deliver. From the days of Christ every town and almost every village in Palestine had at least one synagogue (Acts 13:21; Mt 9:35). The same held good of important places of the Dispersion where there was a sufficient number of Jews. If they had no local synagogue, they would at times meet in the open air. At Philippi in Macedonia Paul organized a prayer meeting by the river-side, which afforded facilities for the ceremonial ablutions (Acts 16:13).

From the New Testament we learn that there existed synagogues at Nazareth, Capernaum, Damascus, Salamina, Pisidian Antioch, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus. From other sources we know that there were synagogues in Rome, Alexandria, Dura-Europos, and others almost innumerable, both inside and outside Palestine. There was a large number of synagogues in Jerusalem, though the total of 480 given by rabbinical tradition is certainly exaggerated.

When Herod's Temple was destroyed and the Jewish people ceased to be a national entity, the synagogue was to survive and continue to play a capital role in the survival of Israel.

In India there are synagogues in several cities.

In December 1968, the Paradesi Synagogue standing in the grounds of the Maharaja of Cochin in South India completed 400 years. At the invitation of the 87-member Jewish community of Cochin, India's Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, visited the city to inaugurate the celebrations to mark the occasion. A 20-paise commemorative stamp was issued by the postal department. At about the same time Suriman in South America issued a commemorative set of three stamps to mark the restoration of a seventeenth-century synagogue and other monuments at Joden Savanne, a plantation town on the Suriman River. One of the stamps bears the biblical inscription in Hebrew, "My house shall be called a house of prayer." Also in December 1968, Madrid witnessed the official inauguration of a Jewish synagogue, the first to be erected in Spain since the fifteenth century.

IV. RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHURCH

7. 'Synagoga Libertinorum'

In the Acts of the Apostles (6:9), we see Stephen the deacon preaching in Jerusalem to Jews of Hellenistic background, and rousing the religious susceptibilities of synagogue members. "There were those who came forward to debate with him, some of the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it is called), of the Cyreneans and Alexandrians, and of those who came from Cilicia and Asia."

How many synagogues are here mentioned? It is not clear whether Luke refers to one, two, three or five synagogues. The Freedmen or *Libertini* were probably descendants of those numerous Jewish captives whom Pompey deported to Rome in 63 B.C. They were subsequently emancipated, and some of their descendants, being banished from Rome on account of their faith, returned to Judea. According to some authors, the one synagogue of freedmen included freedmen from the four towns and districts mentioned. Thus the New English Bible translates: "the Synagogue of Freedmen, comprising Cyreneans and Alexandrians and people from Cilicia and Asia." Others maintain that two synagogues are meant: one of Freedmen from the two African centres, and the other of Hellenist Jews from Cilicia and pro-consular Asia. Three synagogues would represent the Freedmen, Jews from Africa, and Jews from Cilicia and Asia. The five names may stand for five different synagogues. Among the members of

the Cilician synagogue was probably Saul of Tarsus.

These synagogues of foreigners residing in Jerusalem remind one of today's foreigners' churches in Rome, where there is St Louis of the Frenchmen, St James of the Spaniards, St Mary of the Anglo-Saxons, St Susanna of the Americans, to say nothing of the many national colleges.

8. A Model Lesson

We read in the Gospels that our Lord preached often in the synagogue. The traditional form of service in the synagogue gave Him the opportunity of announcing the happy news of salvation, without coming into conflict with the customs of his compatriots.

Capernaum, today's Tell Hum, on the northern shore of the Lake Genesareth was a witness of much of the early ministry of Jesus, and became known as His own town. The synagogue of Capernaum is often mentioned in the Gospel. The synagogue that has been partially restored, though most probably is not the one which the Roman centurion built for the Jews at his own expense, and in which Jesus read the Scriptures, preached His message and wrought some miraculous cures, is a somewhat more recent building erected on the very site of the centurion's synagogue.

During the second and third centuries a period of synagogue building began, after the general

destruction of synagogues in connection with the two Jewish uprisings of the years 66 and 132. Until the beginning of the present century, it was believed by many scholars that some of the ruined synagogues of Galilee went back to the time of Christ, before the first revolt. According to Professor W. F. Albright, there can no longer be any doubt that this view was wrong and that no standing ruins can be dated before the Antonine period which spans the second century. This statement would remain true in as far as it refers to Galilean synagogues even if Professor Yadin's surmise, that a large rectangular hall unearthed by his archaeological expedition of 1965 in the Masada fortress near the Dead Sea, was proved correct.

The excavation of the synagogue at Capernaum was begun by two German archaeologists, H. Kohl and C. Watzinger, in 1905, and was completed in 1926 by the Franciscan Fathers who own the site. The rather ornate building was of white limestone, contrasting vividly with the black lava of which the surrounding houses were constructed. The main hall is rectangular, nearly 25 metres in length and three-fourths as wide; east of it is a colonnaded court. The building was elaborately decorated with carved-stone ornament; its walls may have been covered originally with painted frescos like the walls of the almost contemporary Dura synagogue near the Euphrates. The latter, constructed in A.D. 244, was found almost intact by the Franco-American expedition which excavated it in 1932; its richly painted walls have yielded a wealth of information for historians of art.

The most detailed account of our Lord's teaching methods in a synagogue is that given in St Luke's Gospel (4: 16-30). Jesus was in his own town of Nazareth. His ministry and miracles, both in Judea and Galilee, had fixed the people's attention on Him. It was but natural that He should be invited to speak to the people in the synagogue. He was free to choose any passage from the prophets and develop it at will.

Here we see that teaching in the synagogue Sabbath after Sabbath was something of a habit with Jesus. We see the synagogue attendant offering the sacred book to the speaker and replacing it into the cabinet. Jesus stood up to read the meaningful text of Isaiah, and then sat for the commentary and application.

9. A Sample from Saint Paul

Our Lord's use of the synagogue meetings to preach His Gospel must have struck Saint Luke as having inspired the method followed by his master Paul. Thus in Acts (13:14-41), the author tells us how Paul on arriving at Pisidian Antioch began preaching at the synagogue every Sabbath. Paul stood up and read from the Law and the Prophets, and he; a former Sanhedrist and a pupil of Gamaliel, was then invited by the synagogue authorities to say a few words to the people. In Judea Paul would have given his homily sitting, but in the Dispersion synagogues he followed the Greek custom and spoke standing. "Then Paul stood up, and made a gesture with his hand to

claim audience. Listen, he said, men of Israel, and all you who worship the true God."

In the synagogue there must have been a considerable non-Jewish element. It was this portion of the mixed congregation, the Gentile adherents of the Jewish faith or "Proselytes of the Gate", which was so deeply impressed by Paul's sermon. There was a request for a special address on the next Sabbath to a predominantly Gentile audience, and "almost all the city assembled there to hear God's word" (Acts 13:42-45).

Paul's sermon, reported in some detail, outlines the history of salvation, and shows the conformity of the new teaching with the Scriptures. In the same way Paul got into contact with other Jewish colonies in Asia Minor, Macedonia and Achaia. In acting thus Paul was only following in His Master's footsteps.

10. The Synagogue and Early Christianity

The synagogue played a vital part in the origin and early development of Christianity. Jesus attended the synagogue regularly and made it one of the places in which he often taught. The accepted procedure of Bible reading and homiletic commentary gave Him occasion to announce the gospel.

Even closer is the connection between the synagogue and the preaching of the gospel by the apostles. Paul began his preaching in the synagogue of Damascus, and in his journeys

made it a practice to go first to the local synagogue where, as a guest speaker, he would be invited to give a homily. This procedure is mentioned in the Acts as followed at Salamis in Cyprus, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, and Ephesus.

What Saint Paul says of the Mosaic Law in his letter to the Galatians, can be said equally of the Synagoge. The history of the human race before Christ Paul calls mankind's minority; man was but a child, undergoing the discipline and acquiring the knowledge imparted in the school-room. The Gentiles had the natural law, and the Jews had besides the Mosaic Law to prepare them to enter into the inheritance of the promises held in trust until humanity came of age. The Law is compared to the *paidagogos* of those days, who bore little resemblance to the modern teacher. A reliable and faithful slave, often very ignorant, he accompanied his pupil everywhere. He was a combination of nurse, servant and tutor to the boy until this mastered the elementary lessons of the primary school. Canon J. B. Phillips has translated the passage into modern English thus: "The Law was like a strict governess in charge of us until we went to the school of Christ" (Gal 3:24).

Such was in God's providence the role of the Synagogue in our regard — *paidagogos eis Christon*. Alfred Edersheim, once lecturer on the Septuagint at Oxford, and himself a Jew converted into Christianity, wrote seventy years ago in his *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*:

“The Synagogue became the cradle of the Church. Without it, as indeed without Israel’s dispersion, the Church Universal would, humanly speaking, have been impossible, and the conversion of the Gentiles would have required a succession of millennial miracles” (i, 431).

i

4

Herods and Procurators

17. Herod the Great
18. Archelaus
19. Herod Antipas
20. The Two Agrippas
21. Government by Procurators
22. Pontius Pilate
23. Felix and Festus

History was written

and history

Archives

of the

of the

of the

of the

Herod the Great

I. THE TEMPLE BUILDER

1. The House of Herod

As Ricciotti remarks, Jesus, who was killed on the charge that he had proclaimed himself king of the Jews, was born under a king of the Jews who was by birth neither a king nor a Jew.

The name Herod, in Greek "Hero's offspring", is used in the New Testament for various persons. First of all, there is the founder of the dynasty, Herod the Great, who slaughtered the Innocents and died while the Holy Family was in Egypt.

Of his descendants of the same name, the best known to Gospel readers is his son Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, who killed John the Baptist and mocked Christ during the Passion. There is also Herod Agrippa, the grandson of

Herod the Great, who was responsible for the death of James the Greater and for Peter's imprisonment (Acts 12).

The first Herod was the son of Antipater, an Idumean, and Kypros, the daughter of an Arabian king, therefore not of Jewish descent. He proved one of Rome's most successful puppet rulers, received from the Roman senate the title of "king of the Jews, friend and ally", and became known as Herod the Great. None of his ten wives is ever mentioned in the Bible, though their names are known from other sources.

Josephus describes him as a man of great physical bravery and skill, a perfect marksman with arrow and javelin, a mighty hunter who in one day bagged forty wild beasts, and such a warrior as could not be withstood (*Wars*, i, 21). From every crisis with his opponents he emerged with larger powers and territory than before, until Augustus judged him "too great a soul for so small a dominion", restored the cities of Hasmonean Palestine to his kingdom, and wished Herod might rule Syria and Egypt too (*Antiquities*, xv, 7; xvi, 5). The Idumean was as generous as well as a ruthless man, and the benefits he conferred upon his subjects were equalled only by the injuries he did them.

Historians usually divide Herod's long reign (37 B.C.-4 B.C.) into three periods: consolidation, glorious prosperity, intrigue and dissension.

2. *The Survival of the Fittest*

Proclaimed king of Judea in Rome in 40 B.C. Herod laid siege to Jerusalem with the aid of Roman troops and entered the holy city triumphantly in 37 B.C. to begin his reign.

To prop up his tottering throne and remove any possible claimant, the unscrupulous upstart had to contend with many enemies and displayed great cruelty.

These considered him a usurper who was wearing a crown that belonged by right to the national dynasty of the Hasmoneans, known also as the Maccabees, who had given the Jewish people a strength and unity that they had never known since the Exile. Being daring and astute, Herod ruled the rebellious Jews with an iron hand, and courted the pacifists with lavish generosity.

Although Antigonus, the last king of the Hasmonean line, lay in a faraway prison in Antioch, he still had many supporters among the aristocrats of Jerusalem. Taking no risks, Herod had no less than forty-five of these dangerous leaders put to death.

The young high-priest Aristobulus, Herod's brother-in-law and a Hasmonean, was strangled by the king's orders. The last Hasmoneans to succumb to Herod's suspicion and distrust were his own favourite wife Mariamne and her mother Alexandra. Mariamne's death recalls in many ways Othello's wife's murder. As soon as the sentence was executed, Herod went almost mad

with grief. He called out her name repeatedly, sent his servants to summon her, gave up public affairs, went into the desert and was brought to his palace in a state of fever and insanity.

3 . Operation Stone

The second stage of Herod's career is characterised by the extension of his kingdom and his building projects. Traconitis, Batanea and Auranitis were added to his territory. The wily prince, however, was not able to prevent Mark Antony from presenting Cleopatra with several slices of his kingdom, including the rich and fertile region of Jericho.

His prodigality in raising monuments and public buildings and in founding and embellishing whole cities earned him the title "Herod the Great". In Jerusalem he built a theatre and an amphitheatre. He restored the tower overlooking the Temple and renamed it Antonia in honour of his patron Mark Antony. He rebuilt the city of Samaria which he called Sebaste, the Greek name for Augustus, in whose honour he erected three temples. To curry favour with the emperor, he erected a fine city in the Greco-Roman style on the coast and called it Caesarea Maritima, Caesarea-on-Sea, where the Roman Procurators would have their official residence. As he felt it necessary to base his authority on force, the country was soon dominated by a chain of impregnable palace-fortresses, such as Herodium, Hyrcania, Macherus and Masada.

His benefactions to cities were not confined to those of his own kingdom. To the Ascalonites he gave baths, ornamental fountains and colonnaded courts. Ptolemais, Damascus and Phoenician Tripolis received a gymnasium apiece; Tyre and Sidon each a theatre; Laodicea-on-Sea much-needed aqueducts. Antioch, the capital of the Seleucids, received a sumptuous gift: two miles of the principal streets were paved with marble blocks and their sidewalks ornamented with Greek colonnades.

In his journeys through the Greek archipelago on the way to and from Rome, he left behind a trail of grateful cities. In the island of Rhodes he left funds sufficient for the building of a fleet. At Athens an inscribed statue-base still records the gratitude of the people to "King Herod, the friend of Rome, for his beneficence and good-will to our City."

His most spectacular gift to Greece was his revival of the Olympic games, which had been very much curtailed owing to the financial stringency of the period. Herod consented to be president of the games when he passed through Greece in 12 B.C., and celebrated them on the most splendid scale. Later he earned for himself the title of perpetual president of the games by settling on them a permanent endowment.

4. The House of the Lord

Lavish as were Herod's benefactions to the pagan world, they were all eclipsed by one

magnificent gift which he made to the Jewish people, the new Temple of Jerusalem. This he did to ingratiate himself with the Jews, who had resented his extravagant use of the national income in favour of the unbelievers.

But the Jews feared Herod even when he brought them gifts! When this project was announced to a national assembly, his pronouncement was greeted with suspicious murmurs, and an absurd rumour went round that the Idumean would pull down the old temple indeed, but would never build a new one.

But full-scale preparations for rebuilding were soon in evidence before demolition work started. Herod collected a thousand wagons for the carting of the stone, enrolled ten thousand workmen, and trained a thousand priests as masons and carpenters. The Law forbade laymen to enter the temple itself, and Herod was not going to give his critics a chance of raising a cry of sacrilege against him.

Demolition work and building operations were started simultaneously in 20 B.C. and proceeded with astonishing rapidity. The temple proper was completed in eighteen months, and was immediately inaugurated with a magnificent festival at which three hundred oxen were sacrificed. The construction of the outer courts was a matter of less pressing urgency and took good many years to complete.

5. A House Divided

Herod the Great would have been much greater,

had he died ten years before he did. The last ten years of his life were filled with untold domestic dissension, suspicion and bitter hatred.

When Alexander and Aristobulus, sons of Herod by the murdered Hasmonean Mariamne, and heirs apparent to the throne, returned from Rome, where they had been educated, they were accused by Herod's sister, the scheming Salome, of plotting their father's assassination in vengeance (shades of Orestes!) for their mother's murder. The two brothers were imprisoned at Sebaste, and at their father's orders they were strangled. Another son, Antipater, was recalled from Rome by Herod, who had him imprisoned and slain five days before his own death.

Shortly before his death the king ordered two rabbis, who had removed the eagle standard over the temple door, to be burnt and forty of their followers to be beheaded. This was Herod's way of making sure that his death would be followed by mourning.

II. THE BABY KILLER

6. *Wise Men from the East*

Apart from the reference made by Saint Luke (1:5) in connection with the time of the birth of John the Baptist, and consequently also of Jesus, Herod the Great is mentioned in the Gospel only in the story of the Wise Men from the East and the slaughter of the Innocents at Bethlehem (Mt 2:1-18).

The facts related here are not preserved in profane history, but are in entire accord with what the sources tell us of Herod's suspicious and ruthless character. The tyrant, who had slain his own sons and all pretenders or rivals whom he suspected of plotting against him, would not feel at ease hearing that a child of David's line had just been born to be king of the Jews. He who had committed other mass murders would not shudder at the thought that the safest way of meeting the situation was to slay all the male infants who came into the world about the same time and place.

The question which the Wise Men from the East put as they entered Jerusalem, "Where is he that has been born, the king of the Jews?" marked them as complete strangers unaware of the local political conditions. There was no king of the Jews but Herod, and the least knowledge of his character would reveal that any potential competitor once discovered had his days, and even his hours, numbered. Hence in the interests of the

Child they sought, the question was as dangerous as it was naive.

7. *Bethlehem Babes*

Herod was fearful that He who came to give us a heavenly crown, would steal his own tinsel one. "*Non eripit mortalia qui regna dat caelestia*" (*Sedulius*).

Herod had first to find out where the rival monarch had been born. If this were the promised Messiah, the chief priests and the learned biblical scholars ought to know. These knew their Prophets, and answered without hesitation, "Bethlehem". Once he knew the place of birth, he had to ascertain the time. From the visitors he found out the time of the star's appearance; that would be the clue. He pretended that he wanted to bring gifts, but the only gift he was preparing was death. How must Herod have chuckled after the Wise Men's departure! Wise indeed! The plot was skilfully contrived. The simple Orientals had swallowed the story hook, line and sinker.

When, through his secret police, Herod discovered that he had been outwitted by the strangers, he flew into a paroxysm of rage, and decided on a fool-proof plan: better that a dozen too many should die, than the one real rival should escape. And the massacre of the innocent babes followed (making it difficult for all times to out-Herod Herod), but the one babe actually wanted lived.

8. *Tyrant's Death and Saviour's Birth*

Meanwhile the old king was breaking down with disease and grief. After frustrating so many attempts against his life he tried to kill himself, but was prevented. Soon came the long-awaited, but much dreaded, news. Herod, who had been ailing for some years, had died a painful and ignominious death at Jericho, apparently from a cancer of the bowels. It was said of him by his enemies that "he stole to the throne like a fox, ruled like a tiger, and died like a dog."

Josephus has left us a detailed and frightful account of Herod's last days:

"Herod's illness grew worse every day in punishment for his sins. He felt that he was being consumed by a fire which glowed within his entrails. His intestines were ulcerated and certain parts of his body were rotting away, crawling with worms and giving off an unbearable stench. On the advice of his doctors he had himself brought to the warm baths at Callirrhoe, near the Dead Sea, at the foot of Machaerus, where later John the Baptist was beheaded. Back in Jericho, when he saw that death was near, he ordered the principal men of the kingdom to come to his deathbed, and he commanded his sister Salome to have them all killed as soon as he died so that, since the people would not mourn him, there would at least be great wailing and lamentation throughout the land when he departed from life. Before the news of Herod's death was divulged, however, Salome freed the great men of the

kingdom, thus leaving unfulfilled the tyrant's cruel command" (*Antiq. Jud. xvii, 6-8*).

Herod was given a funeral suitable to his title, the Great. His body, clad in royal purple, a sceptre in his hand and a crown on his head, was borne on a golden bier from Jericho to Herodium, where it lies today in that magnificent ruin still showing parts of the fortress wall, between Bethlehem and the Dead Sea.

Herod died four years before the Christian era. It may be remembered that Jesus was born most probably one or two years earlier, in the year 5 or 6 B.C. It is known that the beginning of the Christian era was mistakenly established by a learned Scythian monk, Dionysius Exiguus or Little Denis, who lived in Rome in the sixth century.

Herod's death was the most fateful event that had occurred in Palestine for a generation—that is, if we except the birth, a few months before, of a child called Jesus to a couple from Nazareth. But who took any notice of that?

The mass of the Jewish people longed for freedom from external restraint, and began to look increasingly to the mysterious personage of the Messiah, long promised by prophecy, as the one who would come in due time to restore an independent theocratic state in Judea and rid the land once and for all of its burdensome oppressors. Even a pagan poet like Virgil may have had such a peaceful conqueror in view—not a few have

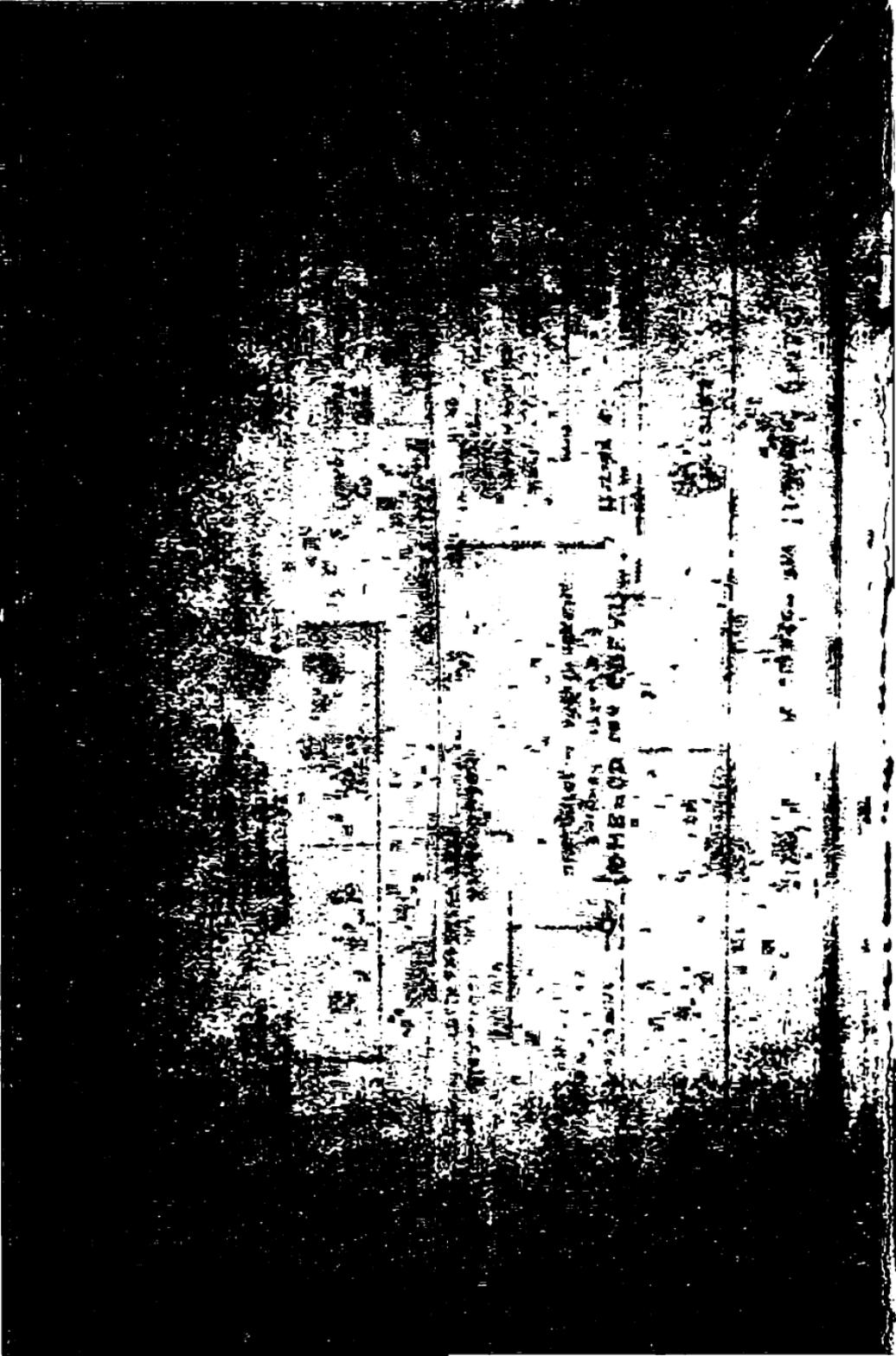
maintained this—when in 40 B.C. he foretold in his fourth eclogue the return of the Golden Age.

The general expectation was realised, shortly before Herod the Great died, by the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose coming fulfilled the hopes of the prophets. What was ironic about the situation was that the Jews failed to recognize in His person and work that larger deliverance of the human spirit which by its very nature transcended purely political or territorial considerations. The freedom which Jesus was to win for men was of a spiritual order, liberating them from the bondage to sin and to purely human institutions, and claiming their loyalty to a kingdom which was not of this world.

HERODS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

This list shows the members of the family of Herod, of four generations, who are mentioned in the New Testament. The numbers prefixed to the names correspond with those prefixed to the same names in the table on the next page.

1. Herod the Great: Mt 2: 1-22; Lk 1:5.
2. Archelaus: Mt. 2:22.
3. Herod Antipas: Mt 14:1-10; Mk 6:14-28;
Mk 8:15; Lk 3:1,19; Lk
8:3; Lk 9:7-9; Lk 13:31;
Lk 23:7-15; Acts 4:27.
4. Philip (tetrarch): Lk 3:1.
5. Herod-Philip: Mt. 14:3-11; Mk 6:17-28;
Lk 3:19.
6. Herodias: Mt 14:3-11; Mk 6:17-28;
Lk 3:19.
7. Salome: Mt 14:6-11, Mk 6:22-28.
8. Agrippa I: Acts 12:1-6, 11, 19-23.
9. Agrippa II: Acts 25: 13-27; Acts 26.
10. Bernice: Acts 25: 13-27; Acts 26.
11. Drusilla: Acts 24:24.



AVOIDED BY THE HOLY FAMILY*1. Disputed Succession*

On their return to Palestine from Rome, where they had been educated, each of the three sons of Herod the Great, Archelaus, Antipas and Philip, adopted the family name "Herod", much to the confusion of future New Testament readers.

The death of Herod the Great, in the spring of 4 B.C., left his country and family in chaos. He had put his three eldest sons to death, and had thrice altered his will, naming a different heir each time. The last will provided for succession as follows: Archelaus was named heir to the throne with direct dominion over Judea, Samaria and Idumea; Antipas was to be tetrarch of Galilee and Perea; lastly Philip was appointed tetrarch of the

north-eastern regions, which the late king had annexed to his original domains, Trachonitis, Batanea, Auranitis and Gaulanitis.

This will, however, had first to be approved by emperor Augustus. Archelaus and Antipas set out for Rome, each to plead his own case. But the Jews who were generally hostile to the Herodian dynasty, were not idle meanwhile. They despatched a delegation of leading citizens to Rome to beseech the emperor to suppress the royal title in Judea. They preferred to be annexed to the empire by incorporation to the Roman province of Syria. They thus anticipated a phrase their children were to use a generation later against a greater than Archelaus—"We have no king but Caesar."

The shrewd Augustus respected Herod's will in the allocation of the various territories, but refused to grant Archelaus the title of king. He promised him, however, the royal dignity if he rendered a good account of himself. Meanwhile Archelaus' title would be that of ethnarch, whilst his two brothers would be tetrarchs. The name ethnarch ("ruler of a people") was used with different meanings at different times and places. The title was less than that of a king, but more than that of a tetrarch. The title tetrarch ("one of four rulers") was introduced by Philip of Macedon to designate the governors of the four districts into which Macedonia was divided. Later, as in the case of the Herods, it meant the ruler of any relatively small region.

2. Incompetent Ruler

It was soon evident that the ethnarch of Judea would not qualify for the title of king.

Before leaving for Rome to press his suit with the emperor, he had three thousand of his subjects (according to Josephus' figures) massacred by his troops in the temple area during the feast of the Passover because of a pretended uprising. He decided to play the tyrant deposing priests who did not suit him, punishing the least disorder with fire and sword, and increasing taxes without justification.

His reputation was detestable from the start. Thus when Saint Joseph, upon returning from Egypt, learned that Archelaus was ruling in Judea and how he had inaugurated his rule, he decided, as a measure of common prudence, not to settle at Bethlehem but to withdraw the Infant-Saviour from the dominions of Archelaus. Where would he go? Divine Providence intervened, and he retired to Nazareth in Galilee. This land was under the other brother Herod Antipas, who then seemed to be the lesser evil. It thus came about that Jesus spent most of His life as a subject of a man who was to hand Him back to be put to death by the authority of the Roman procurator.

In the ninth year of his rule, Archelaus achieved the well-nigh unique distinction of uniting the irreconcilable Jews and Samaritans, who jointly denounced him to Augustus. The deputation charged their ruler with unduly interfering in the appointment of high-priests, with being despotic in his government and morally dissolute. The emperor decided to put an end to a regime which had proved such a failure. The incompetent

Archelaus was summoned to Rome and banished to Gaul. His territories were at once annexed directly to the Roman province of Syria under procurator Coponius, the first of a series of which Pontius Pilate was the fifth.

3 . Archelaus in a Parable

Only once is Archelaus mentioned by name in the New Testament. However many authors have seen a thinly-veiled reference to him in one of the less known parables of the Gospel—the parable of the nobleman who went to a far country to have the royal title bestowed on him, and so return (Lk 19:11-27).

The meaning intended by Our Lord is clear. The nobleman who seeks the royal investiture is a figure of Christ himself. He is, indeed, already reigning; but He has not yet received the official consecration of His royalty, and to receive this He goes to His Father. The irreconcilable enemies are, no less clearly, those who in a few days will shout before Pilate: “We have no king except Caesar.”

The allegory contained nothing obscure for Christ’s contemporaries. At that time, the kings allied to Rome, who were in reality nothing more than vassals, had to solicit the permission of the emperor to ascend the throne. The parable alludes to the embassy sent by the opposition to thwart the prince’s attempt and to make it clear that they would not have this man for their king. Actually Archelaus, Herod’s heir, had his claims to kingship rejected and on his return took a bloody revenge on those who had opposed him.

*Herod Antipas***BEHEADS JOHN, MOCKS JESUS***1. Herod and Herodias*

Herod Antipas, who had inherited the tetrarchy of Galilee and Perea from Herod the Great, is mentioned nine times in the Synoptic Gospels and in the Acts, always under the name of Herod. Josephus calls him also Antipas.

His rule lasted from 4 B.C. to A.D. 40. Of all Herod's sons he best reflected his father's character so far as his domineering manner, cunning and love of elaborate display were concerned. He built an entire new city on the western shore of Lake Genesaret, which he made his new capital and named Tiberias after the new emperor.

Antipas took great pains to cultivate the friendship of his imperial patrons, and was

apparently a not infrequent visitor at Rome. Two inscriptions in the islands of Cos and Delos bear witness to his journeys, and prove that he kept up the cordial relations which his father had established with the Greek cities.

He had little luck with Augustus, but seems to have been in Tiberius' good books. The end of Tiberius marked the end of Antipas also.

The one who really dug Herod Antipas' grave was a woman, the famous or infamous Herodias. His trips to Rome had a less fortunate result. On one of his journeys to the capital, he paid a visit to his half-brother Herod-Philip (not to be confused with Philip the tetrarch), and fell violently in love with his host's wife, Herodias, who reciprocated her lover's affection. She was herself a grand-daughter of Herod the Great, being the daughter of the ill-fated Aristobulus, and felt her ambitious spirit cabined by being the mate of a mere private citizen, whereas Antipas was already a tetrarch, and being so high in the favour of Tiberius, might well one day become a king.

But there were two obstacles to the intended union. The first was that Antipas had a lawful wife already, a daughter of the king of Petra. The other fly in the ointment was that for Antipas to obtain his brother's wife by divorce was a flagrant infraction of the Jewish law. But sweeping away all scruples, they agreed that he would repudiate his wife as soon as he returned to his territory, and Herodias would abandon her old husband to fly to the new.

2. Herod and the Baptist

Antipas' subjects were indignant against this shameless violation of the national and religious laws. But no one dared to brave the overweening arrogance of the ruler or the jealous rage of his adulterous and incestuous concubine.

Herod had a following, for Jesus had warned His disciples to "avoid the leaven of Herod" (Mk 8:15). The "Herodians" were probably Jews of influence and standing, who were well disposed towards the Herodian regime, and consequently also to the Roman over-lords.

No one had the courage to tell Herod what the public opinion was about his second union, except a preacher, whom the people called John the Baptizer or Dipper, and whose successful ministry is attested to by the evangelists and by Josephus. Fearless of consequences, the outspoken Baptist condemned the court scandal, and told the tetrarch to his face that his conduct was intolerable.

Herod replied with a warrant for John's arrest, John found himself in the dungeons of the fortress of Machaerus, east of the Dead Sea. The rest—a birthday banquet, a dancing girl, a rash oath, a whisper from Herodias, the man who lost his head—is told in dramatic detail in the Gospels (Mt 14; Mk 6).

Oddly enough, only Josephus tells us that Herodias' daughter was called Salome. The son of the blood-thirsty king who had failed in taking the life of the new-born King of the Jews, had succeeded, at the instigation of Herodias, in stilling

for ever the voice of Christ's herald crying in the wilderness. Shrewd Herod, "the fox", was afraid of John, recognizing him for an upright and holy man (Lk 13:32; Mk 6:20).

When the fame of Jesus began to spread abroad, the uneasy conscience of Herod made him fear that John had come back to life. He then took an interest in Jesus of Nazareth; he had a mind to kill Him too (Lk 13:31).

3. Herod and Christ

Herod Antipas was orthodox enough to go from his Galilean capital to the centre of Judaism for the annual feast of the Passover. The Roman procurator Pontius Pilate, hearing during the trial of Jesus that the prisoner was a Galilean, decided to send him to Herod, who happened to be then in Jerusalem. Did Pilate try to fob off his responsibility to the Galilean ruler, as some have said? He knew that the final responsibility for a death sentence rested in him alone, but he may have expected to get thus some further information and at least he would gain time and the Jews might meanwhile relent and become more amenable to reason.

The petty tyrant did not get from the wonder-worker the entertainment that he expected – not a single miracle; not so much as a spoken word (Lk 23:5-12). Enraged and humbled by the Lord's silence, Herod revenged himself by a shabby piece of banter, in which his entourage readily

joined. "So Herod and his attendants made a jest of him, arraying him in festal attire out of mockery" (Lk 23:11).

Saint Luke alone mentions the part played by Herod Antipas in the Passion of Christ. It may also be observed that the third evangelist throughout his Gospel has more details about Herod than the others. In the Acts he also mentions how the Apostles considered Herod jointly responsible with Pilate for the condemnation of Jesus (Acts 4:27).

Had Luke special knowledge of the Herodian court? Some think they discovered the source of his information in Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward, Chuza. Luke alone of the evangelists mentions this woman as being one of those whom Jesus cured of their diseases, and who accompanied Mary Magdalene to the tomb to embalm the body of Jesus (Lk 8:3; 24:10).

4. Ignoble End

What was the end of Antipas? The same as that of his brother Archelaus. The advancement of Herodias' brother Agrippa to be king, while her husband remained a mere princeling after forty years of faithful administration, aroused the envy of this proud woman, and she prevailed upon Antipas to go with her to Rome to ask for a crown. The two set out in the most magnificent style.

Fortunatus, a confidential freedman whom Agrippa entrusted with a letter to emperor

Caligula, arrived in Italy hard on the heels of Antipas and Herodias, and was able to wait upon the emperor while Antipas was actually with him. This was at Baiae, the fashionable thermal resort in the bay of Naples, where many leading Roman families owned seaside villas. Caligula had received Antipas kindly, but as soon as he was told that a letter had arrived from his dear Agrippa, he interrupted the audience to read it. Its contents were alarming: Agrippa accused Antipas of having taken part in Sejanus' plot against Tiberius, and of being at that very moment in league with Artaban, the king of Parthia, against Rome. As evidence of this last charge, Agrippa alleged that Antipas had in his armoury equipment for 70,000 men.

As a result of these charges, which he was unable to deny, far from securing the coveted crown, Antipas forfeited his coronet; he was stripped of his tetrarcy and banished in A.D. 39 to Lugdunum in Gaul.

The Two Agrippas

I. HEROD AGRIPPA THE FIRST *SLAYS JAMES, IMPRISONS PETER*

1. The Herodian Dynasty

The family relationships of the Herodian dynasty are exceptionally confusing, both because they so often married their cousins and nieces, and because so many of them, in the various generations, were called by the same names.

Eleven members of four generations of the Herodian family are mentioned in the New Testament. There are seven men: the founder *Herod the Great*; his four sons *Archelaus*, *Herod Antipas*, *Philip the Tetrarch*, and another *Philip* called also *Herod*; the grandson, king *Agrippa I*; and this king's son *Agrippa II*. The women are: the

infamous *Herodias*, a grand-daughter of Herod the Great, who, after deserting her husband Herod-Philip incestuously married her uncle Herod Antipas; *Salome*, the daughter of Herodias and Herod-Philip; *Bernice* and *Drusilla*, daughters of Agrippa I.

Some of the more important figures have already been dealt with in the preceding sketches. This chapter will be on the two Agrippas who appear in the *Acts of the Apostles*.

2. *The Vagabond King*

The first Agrippa is one of those improbable characters that owe their greatness to the most astonishing turns of fortune. By and large the one member of the family in four generations to come nearest to the qualities of his grandfather, although flashy and superficial, he had the secret of ingratiating himself both with his Jewish subjects and with his Roman overlords.

Born in the year 10 B.C., the year which his grandfather dedicated his new Temple, when hardly three years old he lost his father Aristobulus, one of the sons whom Herod the Great executed for high treason. His mother packed him off to Rome at once and gave him good instructions. He lived an adventurous youth in the imperial capital, where as a result of an indiscreet remark to the effect that it was high time that Tiberius abandoned the stage and left it to "Little Boots" Caligula, Agrippa had to spend some months in prison. The eventual election of

Caligula, his companion in debauchery, was a stroke of good fortune for the Jewish prince.

The new emperor heaped favours on him and named him king of the northern territories in Palestine. Samaria, Judea and Idumea further south were granted to him by emperor Claudius. Thus from A.D. 41 to 44, as a result of his clever political manoeuvring, he reigned over the whole of Palestine as his grandfather had done.

3. *The Time-server*

By birth, Herod Agrippa was one-quarter Jewish and three-quarters Idumean; by education, he was fully Greco-Roman. At Jerusalem, he was the most punctillious observer of Jewish customs and traditions, offering the prescribed sacrifices and keeping the minutest points of the Law; at Caesarea, the pagan capital of his uncle Antipas, he could give free rein to his gentile tastes.

At this latter city he held gladiatorial games in honour of the emperor, and in the palace gardens visitors could actually see statues of the three daughters of the Jewish monarch, Drusilla, Mariamne and Bernice. Eventually he allowed himself to be called a god.

Agrippa's coins were double-faced in more senses than one. Those struck in Jerusalem bore no effigy, whereas those which came from the mints of Caesarea or Tiberias bore his own image or that of the reigning Caesar.

To curry favour with the people and to remove the bad impression caused by his dissolute youth, he gave proofs of strict conformance to Jewish orthodoxy. This accounts for the persecution which he unleashed against the infant Church, as narrated in the twelfth chapter of the Acts. The real motive in Agrippa's offensive—he personally had no animosity against the new sect—was to put up a show of zeal rather than to give vent to any tyrannical or cruel feelings. He beheaded James, “the brother of John”, and as he found this action pleased the Jews, he went on to arrest Peter as well.

These were severe blows to the young Church. The Sanhedrin saw how the followers of Christ increased in Judea and Samaria as well as in faraway Damascus. It was chiefly the success of the new faith in Antioch that brought matters to a head. There, the labours of Cypriot and Cyrenean missionaries had brought a number of Greeks into the fold. When this happened in the third city of the empire, it meant that it was no longer possible to regard those who walked in the new “way” as merely another feeble Jewish sect. They were now for the first time called, or rather nicknamed, “Christians” (Acts 11:26).

It became necessary to strike at the root of the evil. No better way of doing this than (to mix the metaphor!) having king Agrippa strike at the head. James, the son of Zebedee, was one of the leading apostles, and Peter was the head of the apostolic college. A tradition of the Eastern Church, coupled with Jesus' prediction (Mk 10:35-40), has led some scholars to the conclusion that

the Apostle John drank the cup of martyrdom at the same time as his brother James. It is more likely that John and the other apostles had already by that time left Jerusalem.

Unfortunately for Herod, Peter, the ringleader, escaped from a closely-guarded prison a few hours before the time appointed for his execution.

A free man again, Peter was grateful for God's intervention on his behalf through the services of an angel. He had escaped Herod's clutches. His only regret apparently was having disappointed the eager crowd from witnessing the spectacle of another apostle being put to death! "Now I can tell for certain that the Lord has sent his angel, to deliver me out of Herod's hands, and from all that the people of the Jews hoped to see" (Acts 12:11).

The consternation of the guards the following morning, and Herod's rage and chagrine can be imagined. The usual capital punishment for abandoning their posts was inflicted to the undeserving guards.

4. The End of a Persecutor

The closing scene of Agrippa's short reign follows in the latter part of the same chapter twelfth of the Acts.

Leaving the centre of Jewish orthodoxy, he retired to his usual residence, the more congenial

sea-port of Caesarea. It was the spring of the year 44. His friend, the emperor Claudius, had returned to Rome after a successful campaign in Britain. Agrippa celebrated the occasion in the Roman fashion with games in the amphitheatre.

When he entered the stadium, dressed in a glittering web of cloth of silver, he was greeted with a rapturous ovation. Flatterers among the populace hailed him, as both Josephus and Luke record, as a god. Present at the games were then members of a commercial delegation of the Tyrians and Sidonians.

While he was watching the proceedings from his throne, Herod was suddenly seized with violent internal pains (some moderns, from the symptoms indicated, have diagnosed appendicitis with suppurations and consequent peritonitis). "Immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, for not referring the glory to God; and he was eaten up by worms, and so died" (Acts 12:23).

Such was the death, divinely inflicted, of this persecutor of the Church. Josephus saw in it the penalty for accepting the plaudits of a crowd who acclaimed him as a god. Agrippa was 54, and had ruled the re-united kingdom of his grandfather for only three years.

II. HEROD AGRIPPA THE SECOND

YOU KNOW, PAUL TRIED TO CONVERT ME!

5. *A Young King*

When the first Agrippa died suddenly at Caesarea in the course of a gladiatorial show in honour of emperor Claudius, his son of the same name was only 17, and resided in Rome, where he had been born and brought up.

Claudius was dissuaded from appointing the inexperienced youth to the Jewish throne, and Judea reverted to the rule of a Roman procurator. Four years later the emperor nominated the prince to be king of Chalcis in the Lebanon region, and placed him in charge of the Temple of Jerusalem and of all religious affairs with the right of appointing the high-priests. In 53 the young Agrippa II was made king of the former tetrarchies of Philip and Lysanias, to which territories parts of Galilee and Perea were later added by Nero.

The monarch was a cultured man, a patron of Flavius Josephus, and interested in all that concerned Jewish religious institutions.

In the year 48, when his sister Bernice at the age of 21 became the widow of her uncle Herod, the king of Chalcis, she went to stay with Agrippa; it was known that brother and sister were living incestuously. The affair, which was a scandal to all good Israelites, provoked the sarcasm of Juvenal in one of his satires (*Sat. vi, 158*).

6. *Governor and King*

A well-known passage of the Acts of the Apostles is the meeting of Agrippa II and Saint Paul at Caesarea, recounted in the latter half of chapter 25 and the whole chapter 26.

The new Roman procurator Portius Festus had just taken over office from Felix in the year 60. On his arrival at Caesarea, he found that Paul had been in prison for two full years. Three days after landing, he went up to Jerusalem, where the disgruntled pontiff, who had failed to secure Paul's destruction from Felix, set about this incoming procurator, in the hope that he might prove more pliable.

Ten days later Festus went back to his capital. The Jerusalem authorities followed him with their allegations against Paul. The procurator tried to compromise; would Paul agree to be judged in Jerusalem, as his accusers wanted? The Jewish charges had proved groundless, and Paul was conscious of no guilt; he asked only for justice. He was a Roman citizen, and he appealed to the emperor's court.

At this juncture Agrippa enters the stage. From his northern kingdom he came with his sister Bernice to Caesarea, to pay his respects to the new procurator of Judea, and to establish friendly contacts with his Roman colleague at the outset of his term of office.

Festus paid back the compliment by inviting the king, who was something of an authority in

Jewish law, to act as assessor on a troublesome legal case he had inherited from his predecessor. The unusual prisoner was a Jew from Tarsus, a Roman citizen of the cognomen Paulus. He had appealed to Caesar. If Paul was to appear before Caesar, it was essential that Festus should state a case, and in preparing it Agrippa's technical knowledge would be invaluable.

7. Paul's Defence

Agrippa, who knew Paul from hearsay and did not wish to lose the chance of a discussion with this religious leader, was much pleased at the invitation, and suggested he would like to meet the accused personally. Festus arranged an audience, which was invested with special solemnity to honour the distinguished visitor.

Paul was produced in the council chamber before an assembly comprising Festus himself, Agrippa and Bernice, an escort of military officers and prominent townsmen.

The prisoner's forceful speech can hardly have been very helpful to the procurator for drawing up the memorandum he was expected to submit to Nero: it consisted of an account of his conversion to the belief that Jesus had risen from the dead, and of a personal appeal to Agrippa to accept the story on the basis of scriptural prophecies.

The amiable Roman patrician confirmed his completely alien attitude to religious questions, when in an exclamation of good-natured teasing,

which at the same time reflected his esteem for Paul's learning, he interrupted the speaker's peroration on Christ's sufferings and resurrection with the words: "You are raving, Paul! All your studies are driving you mad."

8. *Agrippa a convert?*

Unruffled by the brusque interruption, the defendant made a reply intended rather for Agrippa, who was more familiar with the subject:

"No, most noble Festus, I am not mad; the message which I utter is sober truth. The king knows about all this well enough; that is why I speak with such confidence in his presence. None of this, I am sure, is news to him; it was not in some secret corner that all this happened. Dost thou believe the prophets, king Agrippa? I am well assured that thou dost believe them" (Acts 26:24-27).

This was direct speech indeed. Paul's veiled challenge put Agrippa in two minds. The king believed in the prophets with an abstract faith. Paul expected from him a practical faith too, one that would see in Jesus the historical fulfilment of the prophecies.

Agrippa felt not a little embarrassed before the crowd. Somebody had struck a chord somewhere in his soul that had never been touched before. But he was an accomplished man of the world, and he knew how to extricate from an uncomfortable situation.

His only reply to this appeal was a half-jest. The Greek text means: "You make very little business (or, you take a very short time) to persuade me to turn Christian." It was the evasive answer of a sceptic who, with a catchy phrase and a little compliment, throws dust in his questioner's eyes and invites him to stop deluding himself. A modern would have said: "Oh, yes, you don't think it would take much to convert me."

Taking the king's clever sally, the single-minded prisoner gave it a serious turn and made a bold and ingenious reply: "Why, it would be my prayer to God that, whether it were with much ado or little, both thou and all those who are listening to me today should become just such as I am." Here he spread his arms and gazed round the hall. The fetters clanked, and he added with a smile: "Except for these chains!"

It was a highly dramatic moment. The Romans smiled at Paul's wish, but they had no idea of the happiness in Paul's soul. Some of the ladies giggled behind their kerchiefs. Agrippa decided to avoid further embarrassment by closing the audience. In view of the incestuous intrigue in which he was engaged and the presence of his accomplice at the meeting, the idea of conversion was too much.

On leaving the hall, the governor, the king, Bernice and the notables compared notes and exchanged impressions on the case. "This man is guilty of no fault that deserves death or imprisonment", they said to one another. And addressing Festus, Agrippa gave his verdict: "If he had not

appealed to Caesar, this man might have been set at liberty." But the solemn formula "*Caesarem appello*", uttered by a Roman citizen, had the effect of annulling all jurisdiction subordinate to the imperial power, to which the accused, guilty or innocent, must needs be remitted. "Thou hast appealed to Caesar, to Caesar thou shalt go."

The procurator's judicial report and the king's verdict must have had something to do with Paul's final release in Rome.

Roman Procurators

MOTIVES: DEFENCE, CONQUEST, PROFIT

1. Provincial System

Apart from a short interruption from A.D. 41 to 44, occasioned by the reign of Agrippa I, Judea and Samaria were under procuratorial rule from A.D. 6, when Archelaus was deposed, until the great insurrection in 66, when Vespasian, the future emperor, took over as commander-in-chief and governor. During these six decades there were in all fourteen procurators, of whom those mentioned in the Gospels and in the Acts are Pontius Pilate, Marcus Antonius Felix and Portius Festus.

An efficient imperial organization demanded an efficient system of control in the provinces. The word "province" originally meant simply "assignment"—it might mean a war or a government assignment entrusted to a man. We still say

in English that some business is not "within one's province", when it is not within one's sphere of action. Gradually the word came to mean the government of a territory and so that territory itself.

The Roman provincial empire grew, as the British and others later were to grow, piecemeal. The motives which led Rome to annex lands outside Italy were three in number: the desire for her own security, or the military motive; the desire for aggrandisement, or the imperial motive; and the desire for gain, or the commercial motive. These motives were operative, at times independently, at times simultaneously.

2. *Proconsuls, Legates, Procurators*

When a newly conquered territory outside the Italian peninsula entered under the direct administration of the Roman empire, it was either made into a province or incorporated into one of the already existing provinces. In 27 B.C. Augustus divided the provinces into two main categories: the senatorial *proconsular* provinces, ruled as heretofore by a governor or proconsul appointed annually by the senate; and the *imperial* provinces under the direct and sole control of the emperor, who sent there his legates or military commanders for an indefinite term of office.

The proconsular provinces were the older, richer and more peaceful Roman territories, such as Sicily, North Africa, Cyprus, Macedonia, Achaia, Asia; they needed no garrisons. The

imperial provinces were the more recent conquests, not yet fully integrated, lying in the boundaries of the growing empire, and required an army of occupation to hold them in subjection; such were Syria, Germany, South Spain.

Roman governors mentioned in the New Testament who were proconsuls are Sergius Paulus, governor of Cyprus, residing at Paphos (Acts 13:6-7); Gallio, governor of Achaia, residing at Corinth (Acts 18:12); and the unnamed governors of the province of Asia, residing at Ephesus (Acts 19:38). Quirinius, governor of Syria (Lk 2:2), residing at Antioch, was not a proconsul but a legate. In the preceding century Cicero, the great orator, had been governor of Cilicia; another literary figure, Pliny the Younger, was to hold the same office early in the second century in the Pontus and Bithynia.

Besides these two normal types of provinces, there was a third class of regions or vice-provinces, either recently annexed or presenting their own special difficulties, to which the emperor sent, for an undefined period, his own representative of equestrian rank, styled a *procurator*. Other Greek and Latin designations of this office are equivalent to *president*, *prefect*, *curator*. Among these imperial provinces which required an extraordinary rule, were the Alps (with its turbulent tribes in a mountainous terrain), Thrace and Macedonia (because of their low cultural level), Egypt and Judea (because of their history and peculiar racial characteristics).

3. A Delicate Post

The Romans could not easily understand the

Jews' stubborn resistance to hellenistic religion and customs, and their persistent loyalty to their own religious faith.

The Jews were notoriously hard to rule, as they had grown increasingly resentful under years of foreign domination. Seeing the hard lot of the procurators, Augustus had arranged the scale of authority in such a way that the superior jurisdiction of the neighbouring legate of Syria might function as an aid and corrective for the ordinary administration of the procurator. The latter had in all important matters to refer to the legate. In practice, however, his autonomy was almost absolute.

As military commander, he had only limited military forces at his disposal, about three thousand men, recruited from among the Samaritans, Syrians and Greeks, since the Jews still enjoyed the ancient privilege of exemption from military service. The Judean garrison was made up of five "cohorts" of infantry and one "wing" of cavalry. One cohort was permanently stationed at the Antonia fortress overlooking the Temple area; in case of trouble the Roman legions of the neighbouring Syria could be called in.

The administrators took particular precautions in their dealings with the Jews: The procurator, for example, did not habitually reside at Jerusalem, possibly with the idea of sparing the followers of Yahweh the sight of a completely pagan life in the middle of the holy city, and possibly too, because he did not trust them. He and his officials were established at Caesarea-on-the-Sea, the hellenistic town built by Herod the

Great. Tacitus rightly calls it the political capital of Judea ("*Caesarea Iudaeae caput est*"—*Hist. ii, 79*) .

The procurator often went to Jerusalem, the national and religious capital, especially for the great feasts, in order to supervise the large and potentially dangerous gatherings that then took place. The palace of Herod, both at Caesarea and at Jerusalem, served as *praetorium*, as the procurator's residence was called. But at Jerusalem he also used the strong and comfortable fortress Antonia next to the Temple for conducting public business.

The administration of justice was left to the Sanhedrin and to local tribunals. The procurator, however, reserved to himself the *ius gladii* or power to pronounce the death sentence (Jn 18:31).

As head of the government, the procurator had charge of levying taxes and collecting the various revenues through officials, many of whom belonged to the native population. Levi and Zacheus were both Jews employed in the revenue department.

4. Religious Liberty

In the religious domain, the Roman authorities, true to their ancient traditions, never deviated from the norm of absolute respect, not only towards the national institutions of the Jews, but also towards their prejudices or eccentricities as well. There was only one exception to this principle of non-intervention in religious affairs on the part of Rome's representative: he could at

his discretion, as Herod had done, depose the high-priest in office. This occurred eight times in the period from 6 to 41.

Many were the privileges Rome granted the Jews or allowed them to keep. Out of respect for the Sabbath rest, they were exempt from serving in the army and could not be called to court on that day. Out of consideration for the Jewish law that forbade images of all living beings, the Roman soldiers entering Jerusalem had orders not to take with them ensigns bearing the image of the emperor. For the same reason Roman money coined in Judea did not bear the emperor's image but simply his name.

Despite their generally able and considerate administration, the Romans were disliked and even hated. No proud and self-respecting nation has ever suffered subjection patiently, as modern anticolonialism has shown. Israel besides cherished the legitimate pride of having brought spiritual truth to the world.

The situation was strange and difficult indeed. An orthodox Jewish subject might not have any dealings with the Romans or enter their houses, since all pagans, according to the Law, were unclean. Thus in the account of Jesus' trial, we see Pilate obliged to come out of the praetorium to speak to the Jews, because "they would not enter the palace themselves! There was the paschal meal to be eaten, and they must not incur defilement" (Jn 18:28).

Many Jews, however, realized that the presence of the Romans in Palestine brought with it many

benefits, preventing disorder and foreign invasion. In fact, one often has the impression that Saint Paul, who prescribed submission to lawful superiors and invited to pray for those in authority (Rom 13:1; 1 Tim 2:1), saw the Roman empire as a historical realization brought about by Providence, something that formed part of the divine plan which should be used for the good of the cause in its beneficial aspects, such as the *pax Romana*, the roads, the ships and even the police.

Pontius Pilate

I. UNPOPULAR TEMPORIZER

1. "*Sub Pontio Pilato*"

It is remarkable that the only merely human being, besides the Blessed Virgin Mary, mentioned in the early formula of the Christian faith is Pontius Pilate. The purpose of the mention of the presiding official is to show, as St Augustine remarked, that the crucifixion of Jesus is a historical fact that can be dated. "*Addendum erat iudicis nomen propter temporum conditionem*" (*De fide et symbolo*, PL 40, 187). But was Pilate's name put into the Creed simply to give the date? Pilate's name will be forever covered with infamy because of the part he took in the condemnation of Jesus Christ.

The phrase "*sub Pontio Pilato*" is not only of

catechetical and liturgical significance, it is strictly scriptural. In his first letter to Timothy (6:13), Saint Paul compares Timothy's loyalty to his faith before many witnesses with the fearless witness to the truth of His Messiahship and kingship, which Jesus Christ gave when he stood "before Pontius Pilate". This last phrase may well be an echo of a credal statement already then in use or, conversely, the germ of a formula adopted later.

The solitary mention of Pilate in Roman sources is in the Annals of Tacitus, where the Roman historian, in speaking of Nero's persecution of the Christians, says that these people had this name because they were followers of a certain Christus, who had been executed by Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius. The interesting original reads: "*Auctor nominis eius Christus, Tiberio imperitante, per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio affectus erat*" (*Ann. xx, 44*). One may well wonder if Tacitus did not get this bit of information from having heard the early Christian creed.

Pontius Pilate, the fifth procurator of Judea and Samaria, was probably descended from the clan of the Pontii, who came to the fore during the Samnite rebellion. Appointed to the post in A.D. 26 by emperor Tiberius, he held office for the unusually long term of ten years until he was dismissed for having massacred an inoffensive group of Samaritans. He was Rome's representative in Palestine during the whole period of the ministry of John the Baptist and of Jesus.

The Gospel (Mt 27:19) indicates that his wife, whom the apocryphal writings know as Claudia

Procula, accompanied him to the East. In republican times it had been illegal for a magistrate proceeding to a province to take his wife with him, but it was first permitted by Augustus.

Five years before Pilate took over in Palestine, a motion had been defeated in the Roman senate proposed by Severus Caecina, as Tacitus tells us, to the effect that the ancient law should once more be introduced forbidding magistrates going abroad to be accompanied by their wives (*Annal. iii, 33-34*). A train of women, the mover said, involves delays, through luxury in peace and through panic in war, and converts a Roman army into a likeness of a barbarian king's progress. Formerly women were restrained by the Oppian and other laws; now loosed from every bond, they rule our homes, our tribunals, even our armies. Despite these and other arguments, the feminists won the day, and Procula went with Pilate, Drusilla with Felix (*Acts 24:24*), Calpurnia with Pliny (*Epist. x, 120-121*).

In a letter to emperor Caligula, Herod Agrippa I—according to a quotation by Philo—described Pontius Pilate as “inflexible, merciless and obstinate”, and Philo himself accused him of corruption, violence, robbery, ill-treatment of the people, execution of men untried and uncondemned and other intolerable cruelties. This portrait, though emphasizing the shadows, and coming in part from Agrippa, who had the name of spying for his friend Caligula, is not wholly unlike the original.

2. *Josephus on Pilate*

Pilate was no favourite with the people, for he had offended their susceptibilities and treated them highhandedly on several occasions. He was the first procurator to bring into the holy city the military standards displaying the imperial image. The Jews rose in rebellion and forced Pilate to remove the offensive representations of the god-emperor.

On another occasion he desecrated Jerusalem by hanging up in the palace gilded votive shields bearing the name of the emperor and some heathen gods. Tiberius finally listened to the plea of the Jews and ordered the shields removed to Caesarea.

Of the riots which Pilate's arrogance, or perhaps mere lack of tact in handling the Jews, occasioned, the most interesting is probably that which occurred when Pilate alienated some of the temple funds to build an aqueduct to improve the Jerusalem water supply. Some nationalist hotheads from Galilee, who gathered around Pilate's tribunal shouting down the project, were put to death by Pilate's soldiers.

All these incidents are described by Flavius Josephus, who was a general in the Jewish revolt of A.D. 66-70. He wrote his two histories, one the *Jewish War*, and the other *Jewish Antiquities*, after his capture by the Romans. His information is often difficult to handle, as the author is torn between his nationalist feelings and the desire of ingratiating himself with his Roman patrons. His

divalent composition is symbolized by his original Jewish name Josephus, and his adopted Roman forename Flavius, the family name of Titus and Vespasian who befriended him.

Josephus, who was born in A.D. 37, mentions Jesus twice in his *Jewish Antiquities*. In relating the execution of James he identifies him as "the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ." This allusion is brief and unquestioned; it is actually quoted by Origen, in his commentary on St Matthew, about A.D. 230, which is a very strong argument against the possibility of its being an interpolation. That Josephus had knowledge of Jesus, and of the events that preceded and followed his ministry, is beyond doubt. Indeed, how could so comprehensive and accurate a chronicler have omitted to mention something which, as St Luke puts it, "was not done in a corner"? (Acts 26:26).

Another passage occurring a few pages earlier in the same book (*Antiq. xviii, 3, 3*) has raised a controversy, and reads as follows:

"Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man—if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him many of the Jews and many others who came from Hellenism. He was the Christ. Although Pilate, at the instigation of the leaders of our people, condemned him to death on the cross, his early followers remained faithful to him. For he appeared to them on the third day restored to life, as the prophets sent by God had foretold these and ten thousand

other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, survives to this day.”

The passage is quoted by Eusebius, about A.D. 324; and by Jerome, a stickler for textual accuracy, some seventy-five years later, but with the important variation: “He was *believed to be* the Christ.”

Until the eighteenth century, few had thought to dispute the authenticity of this passage; but it was then called in question by more than one. Three decades ago, H. St John Thackeray submitted the passage to a remarkable analysis, based on the occurrence or absence of idioms, words and turn of phrase peculiar to Josephus. His verdict was that, although the passage may have been retouched by Christian editors, it was, in essence the undoubted work of Josephus.

It is patent—writes Fr John L. McKenzie in his *Dictionary of the Bible*—that this passage, as it stands, is the work of a Christian interpolator who has glossed the original text of Josephus beyond recovery. There is no reason to think, however, that Josephus did not mention Jesus in this context at all. The statement that Pilate condemned Christ to death on the cross may have been contained in Josephus’ original text, though this is not very likely.

3. *Luke on Pilate*

Pilate is best known to New Testament readers

for his connection with the trial and condemnation of the Saviour, which we shall take up in the following section. Apart from this, only twice is he mentioned in the New Testament, both the passages being from St Luke's Gospel (3:1; 13:1).

The first reference is to the historic moment of the laying, we might say, on the foundation stone of John the Baptist's mission. St Luke begins his narrative with an unusually solemn formula containing detailed chronological indications of what he considers a turning point in history: "It was in the fifteenth year of the Emperor Tiberius' reign, when Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea..."

Luke's elaborate dating finds a parallel, besides the introduction to the prophecy of Jeremiah (Jer 1:1-4), in the set of synchronisms used by Thucydides, one of the greatest historians of all times. This is how this Greek writer, after an introductory chapter giving a brief summary of the earlier history of Greece, sonorously begins the main subject of his book, the Peloponesian War:

"In the fifteenth year of the armistice, when Chrysis was in the forty-eighth year of her priesthood at Argos, and Aenesias was ephor at Sparta, and Pythodorus had still two months to serve as archon at Athens, in the sixth month after the battle of Potidaea, at the beginning of spring a party of three hundred men from Thebes, at about the first watch of the night, entered with arms into the city of Plataea, a town of Boeotia, which was in alliance with the Athenians" (ii, 2).

It will be seen that St Luke's intention is similar to that of Thucydides: to set the Gospel event in the framework of world history. Modern students of the Bible are continually exasperated by the indifference of ancient writers towards chronology, just as modern business men are at times annoyed by business letters undated. Greek historians pinpointed dates by reference to the archons, who held office for a year; Romans gave the names of the consuls. In Palestine there were no convenient annual magistrates, and the careful evangelist had recourse to his historical co-ordinates; one of them was the governorship of Pontius Pilate.

Completely incidental is the information given in the other passage of St Luke's Gospel that Pilate had certain Galileans (and therefore subjects of Herod Antipas) killed while they were offering sacrifices in the Temple of Jerusalem (Lk 13:1). We possess no further details concerning this incident. We may, however, suspect that the hostility between Pilate and Herod, attested by the same evangelist in his account of the Passion (Lk 23:12), was partially motivated by the slaughter of the tetrarch's subjects.

II. PILATE JUDGES CHRIST

4. Jesus on trial before Pilate

The supreme council of the Jews condemned Jesus to death on the ground of blasphemy. The accused had confessed to his being the Messiah, nay more, the Son of God. But the sentence of the Sanhedrin could not be executed without the explicit approval of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate.

Fearing that the procurator would not sanction a death sentence pronounced on purely religious grounds, and knowing that their illegal methods of the preceding night would not bear investigation, they did not ask for confirmation of their decision, but referred the accused to his court for a new trial. Pilate refused to accept the case, which he declared was within their jurisdiction: let them apply the laws of their nation, exclusive, of course, of capital punishment. But this was precisely the crux of the whole matter. Their verdict was "guilty of death"; they were only asking for Pilate's endorsement. And forgetting for the moment their charges of blasphemy, they aimed at Pilate's vulnerable spot: they presented the Galilean rabbi as a dangerous political agitator who was stirring up rebellion against the Roman authorities.

But the procurator was not so naive as to sign at once on the dotted line. The accused was a revolutionary, a conspirator, they said. There was

nothing for Pilate to do but to question the prisoner himself. Was he really a king? That was an ambiguous question, and Jesus removed all ambiguity. His kingdom was of a spiritual nature. Annoyed, Pilate interrupted brusquely: "What is truth?" The magistrate was not interested in a philosophical discussion which was getting beyond his depth, and wished to relieve himself of a barren interview.

In his indecision Pilate saw a gleam of light leading to a possible solution in the mention of Galilee. He would remand the Galilean prophet to the tetrarch of Galilee then at Jerusalem. Christ had not a word for John the Baptist's murderer, Herod Antipas, who sent him back to Pilate, clothed in the white robe of a fool. The subterfuge of a choice between Jesus and Barabbas, did not have the desired effect.

5. The Governor's Wife's Interest

The intervention of the procurator's wife in the trial is a striking incident. As etiquette would not permit her to step on the platform where her husband was seated, she sent an urgent note to him: "Do not meddle with this innocent man; I dreamed today that I suffered much on his account" (Mt 27:19). Here was a pagan woman pleading the cause of Jesus against His own people: the only voice raised in defence of Jesus during the whole trial.

The message must have made a deep impression

on Pilate. However cynical he might be regarding philosophical theories about truth and error, he was certainly very susceptible to the mysterious signs which enjoyed so much credence among the Romans of the day. Every Roman was quite sure that Julius Caesar would have escaped the twenty-three dagger thrusts on the fatal Ides of March seven decades earlier, if he had listened to his wife Calpurnia, who begged him not to go to the Senate that day, because the night before in a dream she had seen him pierced with many wounds.

6. *Pilate Passes Sentence*

The governor made one last albeit futile attempt to placate the mob and free the prisoner. After the soldiers had mocked Jesus, they brought Him to Pilate, clothed with a royal scarlet mantle, crowned with plaited thorns and bearing a reed for a scepter. Instigated by the priests, the populace demanded that He be crucified. Further argument would only increase the tumult; the weakling capitulated, thus perpetrating the greatest injustice in history. Before pronouncing sentence, he symbolically washed his hands—an action familiar to Jews and pagans alike, signifying that one disclaimed all personal responsibility for an act. The scene of Pilate washing his hands was a favourite with early Christian artists, as attested by the relieves in friezes of fourth-century marble sarcophagi preserved in the Roman catacombs and museums.

The penalty for blasphemy among the Jews

(such was the charge against Stephen, Christ's first martyr) was stoning to death; but Jesus was finally condemned in a Roman court to a Roman penalty—crucifixion. The crime was officially stated by Pilate himself on a tablet in three languages: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." There was never a truer statement. The wording of the inscription was not to the liking of the Jewish leaders. On their pressing for a revised version, the haughty magistrate, who felt he had yielded enough to their demands, refused to make any change. He thus impressed on the Jews that a Roman sentence was irrevocable. In God's providence, Pilate's inscription stands as a perpetual monument to the unshakable Kingdom of Jesus of Nazareth.

7. After Christ's Death

As the Roman law stated that the bodies of the condemned should be handed over to relatives or friends, Pilate, who had been informed by the centurion of the death of Jesus, willingly sanctioned that Joseph of Arimathea should take the body.

Pilate's final appearance in the drama of the Passion is the scene in which the chief priests and Pharisees request the procurator for a platoon of soldiers to guard the tomb, lest the disciples should steal the body of the crucified and then spread the news of His resurrection.

The governor thought the very idea ridiculous and preposterous, but because he did not wish to

offend them in a small matter after having already sacrificed his conscience to placate them, he granted their request, but left them to see to the details. One can feel in Pilate's concession the impatience and bad humour of a man who is at the end of his resources. Let them do as they please; he would not mix in the affair himself.

III. HISTORY JUDGES PILATE

8. Pilate's Guilt and Complicity

Jesus gave Pilate a lesson in the art of government. He reminded him that, Roman ruler as he was, with the empire of Rome behind him and the wings of Roman eagles shielding him, nevertheless he was not almighty, he might not use his authority as he pleased.

Pilate was weak rather than malicious. In failing to be just he did grievous wrong, but far worse were those who dragged him into this pass and were moved by hatred and hatred only. "Thou wouldst not have any power over me at all, if it had not been given to thee from above. That is why the man who gave me up to thee is more guilty yet" (Jn 19:11). Such was our Lord's verdict on Pilate expressing the truth, yet tempering it with His innate courtesy and divine forbearance. That was a sentence which set the governor thinking, and which he would remember with gratitude to his dying day.

Two years earlier, in Capernaum, another Roman officer had acknowledged Jesus to be too great to come under his roof. He had recognized Christ as an extraordinary prophet sent by God, while he himself was but a man among men. Had Pilate but yielded to the same light shining on the prisoner before him, had he fearlessly followed the dictates of his conscience, Jesus might have

repeated that He had not found faith like this, even in Israel.

But Pilate was a worldling, willing enough to act justly, if this could be done consistently with his own interests. He acquitted our Lord of every charge, was desirous of releasing Him, and was aware that justice demanded that this should be done, but he knew also that this would further increase his unpopularity.

Among the first generation of Christians much indulgence was shown to Pontius Pilate. Had not the Saviour himself said that he was less culpable than Judas or Caiaphas? His good intentions made people forget, to some extent, his guilt. The Prince of the Apostles, in his discourse to the Jews in Solomon's Porch, made the greater share of responsibility fall upon them, "as Pilate's voice was for setting him free" (Acts 3:13-15).

This last observation is important and corresponds to the Gospel account, although later in the Acts Pilate's passive complicity will be pointed out (Acts 4:27; 13:28). When this book was written, in the later years of Nero's reign, the hope was cherished that grave differences between the Roman Empire and Christianity would not arise and that the magistrates' benevolent attitude towards Paul would be maintained.

Not a few have remarked the special care which the author of Acts seems to take to put the Roman authorities in the best possible light. Peter's reference to Pilate's resolve to release Jesus may be regarded as the first instance of the author's

efforts. This tendency is particularly noticeable when dealing with the various Roman officials encountered by Paul in his journeys.

9. *History and Legend*

Pilate's government came to an end abruptly. A Samaritan impostor promised his countrymen that if they went to the top of Mount Gerizim, he would show them, where Moses had hidden certain golden vessels of the tabernacle. A deluded multitude gathered at the foot of the mountain, and unfortunately they carried arms. Pilate seems to have thought the whole affair was a blind covering other sinister designs, for he hurried forces to attack them and many were slain. As a result of an appeal to Rome, Pilate was ordered to proceed to the capital to answer for his conduct. But here history ends.

Legend has grown thick around the name of Pontius Pilate. The tendency, already discernible in the canonical books, to lay stress on the efforts of Pilate to pass as lenient a judgment as possible on Christ, goes further in the apocryphal gospels, and led in later years to claim that he actually became a Christian. Tertullian's words about Pilate are famous: "*Iam pro sua conscientia Christianus.*" "In his heart of hearts he was actually a Christian" (*Apol. 21*) .

Saint Augustine in his commentary of Psalm 63, formerly read in the Breviary on Good Friday, blames Pilate for Christ's condemnation, but asserts that in comparison with the crime of the leaders of the Jews, Pilate was much less guilty, for he

persisted as long as he could in freeing Him from their hands. That is why he had Him scourged and brought forward to the people in the hope that the sight might satisfy their cruelty. (*"In eo quod fecit Pilatus aliquantum particeps fuit; sed in comparatione illorum multo ipse innocentior"*)

Dante, who in his canto 23 of the *Inferno* allots such harsh torment to Annas and Caiphas, prescribes no punishment for Pilate. He mentions him only indirectly when, in canto 20 of his *Purgatorio*, he describes Philip IV of France, who in 1310 despoiled the Templars, as "the modern Pilate"; but it is clear from the context that the Florentine poet has in mind here, not the trial of Christ, but the earlier episode of the imperial ensigns being carried into the temple.

An official report to Tiberius is attributed to Pilate, in which, after giving a lengthy account of the miracles of Jesus, Pilate excuses himself for having condemned him under pressure from the Jews. Decapitated by the order of Tiberius, he was supposed to have implored Christ's pardon before dying and to have obtained the assurance of salvation. The Coptic Church reckons him as a saint, and assigns June 25 to him and to Claudia Procula, his wife. Procula is also in the Greek calendar on October 27.

But later a reaction set in. Pilate, it was said, was banished by the emperor to Gaul and, like Judas, committed suicide. Fearful legends about Pilate's ghost are still circulating in the Rhone valley and in Switzerland. Some are included in

the *Golden Legend*, though the author, James of Voragine, warns that the reader is free to think of it what he wishes. Pilate's body was thrown, we read, into an Alpine lake, whence a frightful spectre would rise from time to time and constantly repeat the gesture of washing his hands.

In vain did Pilate wash his hands. In the eyes of posterity he remains the responsible author of the death of the God-man, and to the end of time the Church will associate his name with the Crucifixion of Jesus: *Passus sub Pontio Pilato.*"

Felix and Festus

PAUL PRISONER AT CAESAREA

1. Paul and Two Governors

Of the fourteen Roman procurators who governed Judea from 6 B.C. to A.D. 66, Pilate is the only one mentioned in the Gospels. Two others, Felix and Festus loom large in chapters 23 to 26 of the Acts of the Apostles, in connection with Saint Paul's trial.

Felix held office from 52 to 60, and Festus, who succeeded him immediately, lasted for only two years. Felix and Festus, both sporting happy joyful names, are often linked together. Historically and officially they are associated by Saint Paul's trial at Caesarea, and even alphabetically they are juxtaposed in Biblical encyclopaedias.

From the point of character, apart from the fact

that both of them were engaged in unlawful marital alliances, they differed considerably. The latter with a fair sense of justice tried to undo the wrongs perpetrated by his predecessor; but the period of his governorship was too short for him to put his plans into effect. He died at his post in 62 before completing two years in office.

2. *Marcus Antonius Felix*

Governor Felix had been a slave, and the appointment of a freedman to such an office was highly irregular. Both he and his brother Pallas, the all-powerful financial secretary of emperor Claudius, had taken their middle name from the emperor's mother Antonia, whose household slaves they had been. Pallas procured for Felix the office of procurator of Judea.

Felix is given an extremely bad name by Tacitus, who says of him in a famous sentence that "in every kind of brutality and profligacy he wielded the power of a king with the temper of a slave" (*Hist. v, 9*). And elsewhere: "Felix thought that he could do any evil act with impunity, backed as he was by such power" (*Annal xii, 54*).

Suetonius speaks of Felix as "the husband of three queens" (*Claud. xxviii*). We know that one of these wives was a grand-daughter of Mark Antony and Cleopatra; and another was a Jewess, Princess Drusilla daughter of Herod Agrippa I, who had already been married to Aziz, king of Emesa in Syria, and whom he met shortly after he became procurator of Judea. They had a son Antonius

Agrippa, who perished in 79 during the eruption of Vesuvius which engulfed Herculaneum and Pompeii.

Felix exercised his authority so despotically that the Jewish party of the Zealots, which was started by Judas the Galilean against the Roman census of A.D. 6 (Acts 5:37), renewed their agitation against Roman oppression. When Felix suppressed the party with inhuman cruelty, there arose the party of the *Sicarii*, which did not shrink even from assassination. Among the most influential of these fanatics was an Egyptian (Acts 21:38), whose attempt to capture Jerusalem was frustrated by Felix.

The last two years of the governorship of Felix coincided with Saint Paul's imprisonment at Caesarea (Acts 23-24). After the Apostle was arrested in Jerusalem, his case was first presented to Felix at Caesarea. Later the governor and his young divorcee wife Drusilla arranged a social evening at which the prisoner was to speak on Christianity; "he sent for Paul, and listened to his message about faith in Jesus Christ" (Acts 24:24).

Hardly had the speaker launched his instruction, when Felix became alarmed and terrified; for Paul was reasoning on the practical consequences of belief in Christ in the moral sphere: "justice, and continence, and the judgment that is to come."

This was more than Felix had bargained for. There was a gulf between the speaker and his two listeners, since justice for Felix consisted in his

own personal gain, continence was a thing almost unheard of by both Felix and Drusilla, and the account they had to render of their actions was a bugbear that they would have willingly relegated to the world of dreams.

The governor therefore interrupted the preacher. That would do for the moment; he would send for him when he could find leisure. He never asked for a second lecture on Christianity. But the book of Acts tells us expressly that Felix did summon Paul to him on other occasions, and for a very interesting reason: he hoped that Paul would offer a bribe for his release. Felix was recalled to Rome, but he was acquitted of the charges laid against him by the Jews.

3 . Portius Festus

Governor Festus who has already been introduced in these pages in connection with Herod Agrippa II's intervention in Paul's trial, was sent to Judea by emperor Nero in the year 60.

As in our day, in ancient times a new governor was often the target for ambitions unrealised during the regime of his predecessor. Old policies and schemes, long since shelved, shake away the dust and emerge from their pigeon-holes wearing an air of unnatural innocence.

Festus arrived in his new province in the summer of the year 60. He was a Roman noble, and his integrity and justice recalled the Roman administration of better days.

After three days' rest at Caesarea, Festus went up to Jerusalem to meet the Jewish authorities (Acts 25:1). The interval of two years had not quieted their hatred for Paul, and they fostered fresh hopes for his conviction by the new governor, who knew nothing about Jewish affairs. Festus was in the predicament of a British official coming to India earlier in this century and being asked on arrival to decide between two quarrelling Hindu sects.

The Jewish priests asked Festus to hand over to them the prisoner Saul of Tarsus, so that they might try him in their own court in Jerusalem. They had already planned how to murder him on the way. Festus, who was not so inexperienced and had seen the records, replied that if they cared to come down to Caesarea, he would hear them there. The leaders followed him, and made their unproven allegations against Paul.

Trying to strike a compromise, Festus asked the prisoner if he was willing to be re-tried in Jerusalem, but in the procurator's court as a guarantee of a fair trial. Paul saw the hidden hand behind this offer, and uttered the two words which any Roman citizen was empowered to say in any corner of the empire: "*Caesarem appello*", "I appeal to Caesar".

Festus breathed a sigh of relief. After a brief consultation with his legal adviser, the governor announced the appeal in the customary legal form: "Has thou appealed to Caesar? To Caesar shalt thou go."

At this point a new character made his appearance: King Herod Agrippa II, who accompanied by Bernice came for a social call to the new governor. We are already familiar with the speech delivered by Paul on the occasion, aimed mostly at the king.

The common verdict in the end was that the prisoner was innocent, and had he not appealed to Caesar, he might have been set at liberty straightaway. In God's providence this appeal brought the Apostle of the Gentiles in contact with the very centre of the Roman world. The Roman legions would soon march for Christ on the roads of the empire.

Epilogue

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

There is a classical passage in St Luke's Gospel which portrays Christ interpreting the Old Testament as a preparation and figure of the coming Messiah. Two of his disciples were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus on the first Easter Sunday, when Jesus joined the pair of sceptics incognito.

As he had reproved the Scribes, not for reading the Scriptures, but for misreading them (Jn 5:39), he now lovingly chided His own disciples for their lack of faith and their inability to penetrate the inner meaning of the Scriptures. Jesus, the first Christian professor of Biblical exegesis, "going back to Moses and the whole line of prophets, began to interpret the words used of Himself by all the Scriptures" (Lk 24:27).

The result of this peripatetic Bible lecture was

not just the accumulation of a few more minutiae concerning the history of Israel, but a deeper acquaintance with, and a warmer affection for the person of the Saviour, for Whom the Chosen People had been longing for centuries past. "Were not our hearts burning within us when he spoke to us on the road, and he made the Scriptures plain to us?"

From the words employed and the interior enlightenment granted to the two disciples, some Fathers of the Church, as John Chrysostom, Augustine, Jerome and Bede, and not a few later commentators, concluded that Jesus celebrated the Holy Eucharist on this occasion. This, however, is far from certain. What cannot be doubted is that, even if the bread which our Lord broke was ordinary food, this was in any case the sharing in a common table with the risen Lord, a common meal signifying the mysterious communion of the disciples with Christ in His glory and with their fellow disciples. When Jesus vanished from their sight, they had recognized Him, and their communion with Him was now firmly established on the basis of the words of Scripture and the breaking of bread.

Sacred Scripture is, with the Holy Eucharist, the bread of life descended from heaven. As the renovated liturgy clearly brings out, the Sacrifice of the Mass brings us both; there is the liturgy of the Word and the Eucharistic liturgy.

The book of the *Imitation of Christ* speaks in a well-known passage of

"two tables, set one on this side, one on that, in the treasure house of holy Church. One is the

table of the holy altar, having the holy Bread that is the precious body of Christ. The other is the table of God's law, containing holy doctrine that teaches all the true faith and firmly leads them even beyond the veil hiding the Holy of Holies" (Book iv, ch. 11).

As we heard Father (later Cardinal) Bea say in his address on the "Pastoral Value of the Word of God in the Sacred Liturgy", in the first international Congress of Pastoral Liturgy", in the first International Congress of Pastoral Liturgy, held at Assisi in 1956, "It is the great purpose of the liturgical reform to render ever more accessible to the faithful these two tables given us by God Himself."

The Second Vatican Council has synthesized these ideas in the opening paragraph of the sixth chapter of the dogmatic constitution on Divine Revelation, dealing with Sacred Scripture in the life of the Church. The Council Fathers, as authentic interpreters of tradition, state:

"The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since from the table of both the word of God and of the body of Christ she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life, especially in the sacred liturgy."

Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the lips of God. The Christ who tells us "take and eat", tells us also, even as He said to Augustine of Hippo, Anthony of Egypt and Francis of Assisi, "take and read."

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

of some persons and events mentioned in this book

(Some dates are certain, others only approximate)

B.C.

- 962 Solomon dedicates Temple
- 753 Legendary foundation of Rome
- 722 Sargon II captures Samaria
- 587 Temple destroyed by Babylonians
- 586 Babylonian captivity (586-538)
Rise of the Scribes; Origins of the Synagogue
- 538 Cyrus permits return of Jews
Secession of Samaritans
- 516 Dedication of Second Temple
- 458 Jews return under Ezra
- 333 Alexander the Great captures Palestine
- 328 Samaritans build temple on Mt Gerizim
- 285 Beginning of the Septuagint version
- 170 Rise of Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes
- 166 Rise of the Maccabean Dynasty
- 123 John Hircanus destroys temple on Mt Gerizim
- 63 Syria becomes a Roman province
- 63 Pompey captures Jerusalem
- 37 Herod the Great made king (37-4)
- 27 Caesar AUGUSTUS (27 BC – 14 AD)
- 19 Herod rebuilds Temple
- 6 BIRTH OF CHRIST; Massacre of the Innocents
- 4 Death of Herod the Great; kingdom divided
Archelaus ruler of Judea (4 BC – 6 AD)
Herod Antipas tetrarch of Galilee (4 BC – 34 AD)
Philip tetrarch of Iturea etc. (4 BC – 34 AD)
- 2 Revolt of Zealots under Judas the Galilean

A.D.

Archelaus deposed		4	Procurators introduced
<i>Roman Procurators:</i>			(6-41) Judea and Samaria
			(44-66) Whole Palestine
1. Coponius	(6-9)	6	Annas made High Priest
		7	Boy Jesus in Temple
2. Ambivius	(9-12)	9	
3. Rufus	(12-14)	12	
TIBERIUS	(14-37)	14	
4. Gratus	(15-26)	15	Annas deposed
		18	Caiphaz made High Priest
5. Pilate	(26-36)	26	John and Jesus begin ministry
		28	Herod Antipas beheads John
		30	Crucifixion of Jesus; Resurrection
6. Marcellus	(36-37)	36	Stephen's death; Saul's conversion
7. Marullus	(37-41)	37	
CALIGULA	(37-41)	37	
CLAUDIUS	(41-54)	41	
Herod Agrippa I	(41-44)	41	Reunited kingdom
		43	Antioch a Christian centre
		44	Death of James the Great
8. Fadus	(44-46)	44	Peter imprisoned in Jerusalem
9. Alexander	(46-48)	46	
10. Cumanus	(48-52)	48	Ananias made High Priest (48-49)
		49	Council of Jerusalem
		49	Jews expelled from Rome
11. Felix	(52-60)	52	Samaritan-Galilean riots
Agrippa II	(53-100)	53	
NERO	((54-68)	54	Paul's third journey
		58	Paul prisoner at Caesarea
12. Festus	(61-62)	61	St Paul in Rome
13. Albinus	(62-64)	62	
14. Florus	(64-66)	64	July: Fire of Rome
		64	Persecution of Christians
		66	Jewish revolt in Palestine
		67	Martyrdom of Peter and Paul
GALBA, OTHO		69	
VITELLIUS		69	
VESPASIAN	(69-79)	70	Fall of Jerusalem and Temple
		73	Fall of Masada Fort
TITUS	(79-81)	79	
DOMITIAN	(81-96)	81	
NERVA	(96-98)	96	
TRAJAN	(98-117)	98	Death of Apostle John

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