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of the
NEW CATHOLIC BIBLE



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Dedicated to Saint Joseph
Patron of the Universal Church

CATHOLIC BOOK PUBLISHING CORP.
NEW JERSEY

PREFACE

In the words of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “And such is the force and power of the Word of God that it can serve the Church as her support and vigor and the children of the Church as strength for their faith, food for the soul, and a pure and lasting font of spiritual life.” Hence, “access to Sacred Scripture ought to be open wide to the Christian faithful” (no. 131).

Hence, in the life of Christians there can never be too many translations of the Bible. It is a well-known fact that different translations are able to bring out nuances of meaning specific to each one. The Scriptures are so full of meaning that we can rightly say no single translation will do it justice.

Accordingly, it has become customary for Christians to make use of many translations of the sacred books in order to discover the riches of the Bible and pray with its text. In doing so, they are carrying out the recommendation of the Bishops of the United States:

“What is most necessary of all is that we begin . . . to meet with Christ as he speaks to us through the liturgical rites and the inspired word of Scripture. This should best start with the use of the primal form of ‘mental prayer’ or ‘meditation,’ traditionally known as . . . ‘praying the Bible’” (*The Use of the Vernacular at Mass*, no. 1).

Following the highly acclaimed publication of the *New Catholic Version* of The Psalms in 2002 and The New Testament in 2015, this translation of the *New Catholic Bible* has been accomplished by the same board of highly qualified Scripture scholars under the direction of Rev. Jude Winkler, OFM Conv., S.S.L. They were committed to render as perfectly as possible a translation of literal or formal equivalence. Numerous translations were consulted and decisions were made by consensus according to accepted principles of textual criticism.

With a deep desire to be faithful to God’s inspired words, the translators used the best available Hebrew and Greek texts to achieve a dignified and accurate version of the sacred text in language that is clear and meaningful to today’s readers.

With extensive explanatory notes that reflect the most current consensus of Catholic scholarship, the *New Catholic Bible* is a translation that can be trusted to provide the reader with a prayerful and fulfilling Bible experience suitable for private devotion and study.

A ST. JOSEPH EDITION

Therefore, we have thought it worthwhile to make available a Catholic translation of the Bible in the renowned and exclusive format of our St. Joseph Editions of Bibles and Missals. The St. Joseph Edition is an editorial system developed over a span of seventy years. It consists in a series of features intended to ensure that a text (particularly a biblical or liturgical text) is user friendly, leading to greater readability and easier understanding.

The textual features or format in the present case are a large readable typeface, additional headings and subheadings, and a full measure extension for long lines of poetry that clearly indicates when a line has a runover. It also includes general introductions to both the Old Testament and the New Testament as well as introductions to each Book, copious pastoral notes or footnotes. For greater clarity and convenience, the notes are printed at the end of each book.

An asterisk (*) in the text indicates that there is a note to the text in question. Each note is in turn clearly marked with the number of the chapter and verse to which it pertains. Hence, the reader is always aware of a helpful note or cross-reference simply by reading the text.

OTHER FEATURES OF THIS EDITION

The *New Catholic Bible* offers a host of other helpful features. Some editions will include a handy edge-marking Index or ribbon marker and in some editions the words of Christ are in red.

Perhaps most important of all is a series of self-explaining maps, time charts, photographs and illustrations showing key events and areas in the Bible. They are grouped in such a way that the reader is kept abreast of the history of salvation without needlessly turning to some other part of the book. In addition, extensive historical and biblical background material is provided in "Learning about Your Bible" and "Doctrinal Bible Index."

We trust that this new translation of the Bible will lead many into a better understanding of the Holy Books and a fuller knowledge of their principal author, the Triune God, and their primary protagonist, Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word.

CATHOLIC BOOK PUBLISHING CORP.

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THE BOOK OF GENESIS

The Origins of the World and of the People of God

The Book of Genesis is made up of contributions from three sources, the Yahwist, the Elohist, and the Priestly, these contributions being intermingled even within one and the same episode. Despite this, the book has a unity, because the Priestly tradition has given it an organic structure. The story of the origins (chs. 1–11) and the story of the Patriarchs (chs. 12–50) are clearly distinguished.

The work first of all gives an imaginative account of creation and the first sin. Here, elements from ancient tradition are used in sketching a broad picture of the origins; various sections explain how evil, suffering, and death entered the world through the sin of the first man; the promise of salvation makes clear from the outset what the meaning of the entire biblical story will be. The priest who seems to have compiled these pages makes use of increasingly more focused genealogies in order to show the continuity of the creation of Adam and the obscure beginnings of the human race with the beginnings of Israel. Creation thus appears as the first act in the history of the salvation of humankind.

Contemporary advances in the study of the history, laws, and ways of life of the ancient East assure us that the popular stories about the Patriarchs are based on truthful living memories that were transmitted with the intention of being faithful. The sacred writers thus hark back to the distant past in order to show that the Creator has established special bonds with Israel. In the persons of their ancestors this people has enjoyed the preferential favor of God, who has chosen them for a special mission on behalf of the entire human race and has also promised them a land to live in.

This love-inspired plan is accepted by Abraham with a faith that stands up to every test, but the Lord is also able to entrust his promise even to a sinner like Jacob in order to show that his predilection is unmerited. He is thus able to turn to his own purposes a reprehensible crime like that of Joseph's brothers. In short, the second part of the book corresponds with the first: in order to save guilty humankind God enters history and links himself, for a specific period, to a particular people, choosing Abraham rather than Lot, Isaac rather than Ishmael, Jacob rather than Esau. The day will come, however, when all nations will be blessed in Abraham.

The promises stated in the Book of Genesis find their fulfillment in Christ and the Church. Jesus will be born of the line of Abraham, but he exists even before Abraham, because he is the beloved Son of the Father, the second and new Adam who comes to save what the

first Adam had lost. The Church of Easter begins the new creation, but the chosen people of the new covenant are the spiritual descendants of Abraham the believer and are journeying toward the new Promised Land, the kingdom of heaven. The story of the Patriarchs is our story.

The Book of Genesis may be divided as follows:

- I. Origin of the World and Humankind (1:1—11:32)
 - A: Creation and the Fall (1:1—3:24)
 - B: The Reign of Sin (4:1—5:32)
 - C: Death and Resurrection of God's Work (6:1—9:17)
 - D: A World of Diverse Peoples (9:18—11:32)
- II: Origin of the People of God (12:1—50:26)
 - A: Abraham, Man of Faith (12:1—25:18)
 - B: Jacob, the Sinner Who Redeems Himself (25:19—36:43)
 - C: Joseph, the Suffering Righteous One (37:1—50:26)

I: ORIGIN OF THE WORLD AND HUMANKIND*

A: Creation and the Fall

CHAPTER 1

Origin of the Universe.* ¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* ²The earth was formless and barren, and darkness covered the abyss while the Spirit of God hovered over the waters.

³God said, "Let there be light!" And there was light. ⁴God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵And he called the light day, and he called the darkness night. This was the evening and the morning of the first day.

⁶God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters to separate one set of waters from the other."* ⁷God separated the firmament from the waters, those waters that are under the firmament from

those that are above the firmament. And it was so. ⁸God called the firmament the heavens. This was the evening and the morning of the second day.

⁹God said, "Let the waters that are under the heavens be gathered into one place and let a dry place appear." And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry place the land, and the gathered waters he called the sea. And God saw that it was good.

¹¹God said, "Let the land bring forth plants, those that produce seeds and fruit trees that have seeds inside of the fruit they bear, each according to its own kind. And it was so. ¹²The land brought forth plants, each according to its kind, and trees that have fruit with seeds inside of them, each according to its kind. God saw that they were good. ¹³This was the evening

Israel; they saw God and yet they continued to eat and drink.

**C: Moses on the Mountain:
The Regulation of Worship***

Moses Ascends the Mountain of God. ¹²The LORD said to Moses, "Climb up to me on the mountain and remain there. I will give you stone tablets with the laws and commandments that I have written for their instruction."

¹³Then Moses went up with Joshua, his assistant, and they climbed the mountain of God. ¹⁴He told the elders, "Remain here to wait for us until we return to you. Aaron and Hur are here with you. Whoever has any concern can bring it to them."

¹⁵Moses then climbed up the mountain, and clouds covered the mountain.

¹⁶The glory of the LORD* settled upon Mount Sinai, and clouds covered it for seven days. On the seventh day he called to Moses from out of the cloud.

¹⁷The glory of the LORD appeared to the children of Israel to be a consuming fire on the mountaintop. ¹⁸Moses entered into the midst of the cloud and climbed up the mountain. He remained on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

**IV: INSTRUCTION ON THE SANCTUARY
AND ITS MINISTERS**

CHAPTER 25

Moses Receives the Command to Establish a Sanctuary. ¹The LORD said to Moses, ²"Tell the children of Israel to gather an

offering for me. Let each one raise up as an offering what his heart tells him is right. ³This is what you shall gather from them: gold, silver, and bronze, ⁴blue, purple, and scarlet cloth, fine linen, goats' hair, ⁵rams' skins dyed red, sheep skins, acacia wood, ⁶oil for the lamps, balsam for anointing oil and for fragrant incense, ⁷onyx stones and stones for setting in the ephod and the breastplate.

⁸"They are to build a sanctuary for me and I will live in their midst. ⁹Build it just as I will show you, following the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture.

The Ark of the Covenant. ¹⁰"They are to make an Ark out of acacia wood. It is to be two and a half cubits long, one and a half cubits wide, and one and a half cubits high.* ¹¹You are to cover it with gold inside and out, and they are to put a gold molding on it. ¹²You are to cast four golden rings for it and attach them to its four legs, two rings on one side and two rings on the other. ¹³You are to make poles out of acacia wood and cover them with gold. ¹⁴You shall put the poles into the rings on the two sides of the Ark so that you may carry the Ark with them. ¹⁵The poles must remain in the rings of the Ark; they are not to be taken out of them.

¹⁶"You will place the Testimony that I will give you in the Ark.

¹⁷"You shall make a seat* of atonement of pure gold. It shall be two and a half cubits long and

32 so that they may proclaim to
a people yet unborn
the deliverance he has accom-
plished.

PSALM 23*

Prayer to the Good Shepherd

1 A psalm of David.

The LORD is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall lack.

2 He makes me lie down in green
pastures; *
he leads me to tranquil
streams.

3 He restores my soul, *
guiding me in paths of righ-
teousness
so that his name may be glo-
rified.

4 Even though I wander
through the valley of the
shadow of death, *
I will fear no evil,
for you are at my side,
with your rod and your staff
that comfort me.

5 * You spread a table for me
in the presence of my ene-
mies.

You anoint my head with oil; *
my cup overflows.

6 Only goodness and kindness *
will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of
the LORD
forever and ever.

PSALM 24*

The Lord's Solemn Entry into Jerusalem

1 * A psalm of David.

The earth is the LORD's and
everything in it,

the world and all who live in
it. *

2 For he founded it on the seas
and established * it on the
rivers.

3 Who may ascend the mountain
of the LORD?
Who may stand in his holy
place?

4 One who has clean hands and
a pure heart, *
who does not turn his mind to
vanities
or swear an oath in order to
deceive.

5 He will receive a blessing from
the LORD
and vindication from God, his
Savior.

6 This is the generation of those
who seek him,
who seek the face of the God
of Jacob. *Selah*

7 * Lift up your arches, O gates;
rise up, you ancient portals, *
so that the King of glory may
come in.

8 Who is this King of glory?
The LORD, strong and mighty,
the LORD, valiant in battle.

9 Lift up your arches, O gates,
rise up, you ancient portals,
so that the King of glory may
come in.

10 Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts: *
he is the King of glory. *Selah*

PSALM 25*

Prayer for Guidance and Help

1 * Of David.

To you, O LORD, I lift up my
soul;

2 in you, O my God, I trust.

at my birth: the father customarily acknowledged the newborn by taking it upon his knees (see Gen 50:23; Job 3:12).

22:13-22 Around the beleaguered man there arises a wave of hostility; he experiences in his flesh the whole of human sorrow. The images are delusive, and the cries become pathetic. Here is a man whose life is being taken away.

22:13-14, 17 *Bulls . . . lions . . . dogs*: these are metaphors for the enemies. *Bashan*: a land east of the Jordan that was noted for its good pasturage and the size and quality of its animals (see Deut 32:14; Ezek 39:18; Am 4:1).

22:15 *Bones . . . heart*: his combination of "bones" and "heart" (see note on Ps 4:8) was used to refer to the whole person (body and spirit) (see Ps 102:4; Prov 14:30; 15:30; Isa 66:14).

22:16 *My mouth . . . jaw*: see Jn 19:28 ("I thirst"). *The dust of death*: the netherworld, domain of the dead; the author is using the language of his day, as in Mesopotamian descriptions of the netherworld (see Job 7:9, 21).

22:17 *Pierced my hands and my feet*: his limbs are wounded by the dogs as he seeks to fend off their attacks (see also Isa 53:5; Zec 12:10; Jn 19:34). Although the phrase finds its complete fulfillment in Christ's crucifixion, it is not expressly used by the evangelists in the Passion account.

22:18 *I can count all my bones*: this could also be translated as "I must display all my bones." The meaning is that one is attacked and stripped of his garments (see v. 19).

22:19 Explicitly cited in Jn 19:24 as a prophecy fulfilled in the action of the soldiers who divided Christ's garments among them on Calvary.

22:20-22 The scene shifts as the beleaguered psalmist is led to confront the God of the Covenant. He thus recalls God's promises to be near his people and to protect them from all adversity. He throws himself on the Lord's mercy and is comforted.

22:22 *Save me*: an alternative translation is: "You have heard me." The psalmist knows he has been heard and will be delivered from death.

22:23-32 God reverses the righteous man's condition; his hope returns. In the temple, he celebrates his deliverance and offers a sacrifice of communion amidst the poor who love God. Then the perspective is enlarged even more. The whole earth gives thanks to God who rules the world and dispenses justice. The poor are called to the table of God, and the line of the righteous shall never be extinguished from the midst of human beings. Indeed, the passion of the righteous man has changed something in the human world. *Name*: see note on Ps 5:12.

22:23-25 The taunts of the psalmist's enemies are drowned out by the songs of God's faithful. The true *descendants of Jacob* are those who fear the Lord and seek him (see Ps 24:6).

22:25 *Not hidden his face*: a metaphor for God withdrawing from someone (see Pss 13:2; 27:9; 69:18; 88:15; 102:3; 143:7; Isa 8:17; Mic 3:4).

22:26 This verse affirms the importance of public worship by stressing the praise of God in the great assembly as well as the pledging of freewill offerings.

Vows were often made in time of trial (see Pss 50:14; 61:9; 66:1f) and were implemented when God had effected deliverance from the trial (Ps 65:2f).

22:27-32 In an allusion to the Messianic Banquet (see Ps 23:5; Prov 9:1f; Isa 25:6; 55:1; 65:13), the psalmist describes a worldwide company of people from every state in life who will ultimately take up God's praise from age to age. It constitutes one of the grandest visions of the scope of the worshipers who will come to praise the saving acts of the Lord.

22:27 *The poor*: the *anawim*, originally the poor who depended on God for their livelihood; later, the humble, pious, and devout—those who hoped in God alone.

22:30c-32 This is the more common translation (also found in the new Vulgate). An alternative translation is: "and those who cannot keep themselves alive. / Posterity will serve him; / future generations will be told about the Lord. / They will proclaim his righteousness / to a people yet unborn— / for he has done it."

Ps 23 This psalm is a profession of joyful trust in the Lord as the good Shepherd-King that has become one of the world's greatest prayers. The image of God in shepherd's garb has parallels in the Prophets (see Isa 40:11; Ezek 34:11-16) and will be the best known of the allegories in which Jesus speaks of himself (see Jn 10:11-18), so much so that the New Testament writers love to give him this title (see Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 2:25; Rev 7:17). The water, oil, and cup of wine of which the text speaks made Christians think of the Sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. As a result, the psalm used to be sung during the Easter Vigil by the newly baptized, who were filled with the joy of God.

In praying this psalm, we can dwell on the fact that the heavenly Father's love embraces us from eternity, preparing for us in Christ all kinds of spiritual blessings: election, adoption, redemption, incorporation into Christ (see Eph 1:3-14). He watches over us solicitously (see Mt 6:25-34) and follows us through the Good Shepherd who seeks out the straying sheep until he finds it again (see Lk 15).

23:2 *Green pastures*: a symbol for everything that makes life flourish. *Tranquil streams*: literally, "waters of resting places," waters that bring refreshment and well-being (see Isa 49:10).

23:3 *Restores my soul*: the Lord revitalizes the psalmist's spirit (see Ps 19:8; Ru 4:15; Prov 25:13; Lam 1:16). *Paths of righteousness*: paths that conform to the will of the Lord, the "right way."

23:4 *Valley of the shadow of death*: another possible translation is: "through the darkest valley." It refers to any situation that is death-threatening.

23:5-6 What was only a comparison used by the psalmist to indicate the happiness of those who dwell in the house of the Lord has become a wonderful reality in the New Covenant. God sets the table for all who as members of his Church seek rest and protection in the house of God during their pilgrimage. He gives them the Bread of Heaven and the cup of his love and the riches of his grace—Christ's Precious Blood and the anointing of the Spirit with his sevenfold gifts.

23:5 In the ancient Near East, covenants were frequently made at a meal (see Ps 41:10; Gen 31:54; Ob 7).

- 31 Do not envy a violent man
or choose to emulate any of
his ways.
- 32 For the perverse man is an
abomination to the LORD
whose friendship is bestowed
only upon the upright.
- 33 The curse of the LORD falls on
the house of the wicked,*
but he blesses the abode of
the righteous.
- 34 He shows only disdain to those
who are scornful,
but he showers his kindness
on the humble.
- 35 Glory is the crown given to the
wise;
fools inherit nothing but dis-
grace.

CHAPTER 4

Acquire Wisdom*

- 1 Listen, my children, to a father's
instruction;
pay attention and gain under-
standing.
- 2 What I am offering to you is
sound advice;
do not forsake my teaching.
- 3 When I was a young boy in my
father's house,
tender in years and my moth-
er's only child,
4 he taught me and said:
"Let your heart hold fast to
my words;
follow my instructions and
you will live.
- 5 "Acquire wisdom and gain
understanding;
never forget or turn aside
from my words.
- 6 Do not forsake wisdom, and
she will preserve you;

- love her, and she will watch
over you.
- 7 "The beginning of wisdom is:
acquire wisdom,
and no matter what the cost,
acquire understanding.*
- 8 Extol wisdom, and she will
exalt you;
if you embrace her, she will
honor you.
- 9 She will place on your head a
lovely garland
and bestow on you a crown of
beauty."
- 10 Listen, my son, and take my
words to heart,
and the years of your life will
be multiplied.
- 11 I have instructed you in the
ways of wisdom
and led you along the paths
of righteousness.
- 12 When you walk, your steps will
be unimpeded,
and when you run, you will
not stumble.*
- 13 Hold fast to instruction and
never let her go;
guard her carefully, for she is
your life.
- 14 Do not set foot on the path of
the wicked
or walk on the road that evil-
doers follow.
- 15 Avoid it; do not go by it;
turn aside from it and go on
your way.
- 16 For they cannot rest until they
have first done wrong;*
they cannot sleep unless they
have made someone stum-
ble.
- 17 The bread of wickedness is
their food,

- 22 Thus says the Lord GOD:
Behold, I will beckon to the nations
and raise my signal to the peoples.
Then they will bring your sons
in their arms,
and they will carry your daughters
on their shoulders.
- 23 Kings will be your foster-fathers,
and their princesses will serve
as your nursing mothers.
They will bow down to you
with their faces to the ground
and lick the dust from your feet.
Then you will know that I am the LORD;
those who hope in me will not
be disappointed.
- 24 Can spoil be taken from a warrior,
or can the tyrant's captives be
set free?
- 25 Thus says the LORD:
Even a warrior's captives can
be rescued,
and booty can be retrieved
from a tyrant.
I myself will contend with those
who oppose you,
and I will deliver your children.
- 26 I will force your oppressors to
eat their own flesh,
and they will become drunk
on their own blood
as if with wine.
Then all mankind will know
that I, the LORD, am your Savior
and your Redeemer, the
Mighty One of Jacob.

CHAPTER 50**God's Offer of Salvation Remains**

- 1* Thus says the LORD:
Where is your mother's bill of divorce
by which I repudiated her?
Or which creditor of mine was it
to whom I sold you?
No, you were sold because of
your sins,
and your mother was repudiated,
because of your rebellious acts.
- 2 Why was no one there when I came?
Why did no one answer when I called?
Is my hand too short to redeem?
Have I no power to deliver?
By my rebuke I can dry up the sea
and turn the rivers into a desert.
Their fish rot for lack of water
and die of thirst.
- 3 Did I not clothe the heavens in black
and cover them with sackcloth?
- 4* The Lord GOD has given me
the tongue of one who has
been well taught
so that I am able to console the weary
with a message of encouragement.
Morning after morning he
opens my ears
so that I may listen to their concerns.
- 5 And I have not rebelled,
I have not turned away.

THE GOSPELS

The Bible's table of contents (the "canon" of the Scriptures) gives the Gospels in the following order: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

As a matter of fact, only the Book of Mark calls itself a "Gospel"; the others were given this title during the second century.

Alongside these officially recognized writings, a number of other gospels (known as the "apocrypha," that is, "secret" writings) circulated, but they were never accepted by the Church as inspired.

The Differences

The differences among the four Gospels are such that it is very difficult to combine their varied and often contrasting bits of information into a complete and solidly based biography of Jesus.

All four Gospels are very similar in their accounts of the Passion. But apart from that particular sequence, the difference between John and the other three is radical. When we read John, we are told that during his public life Jesus went up to Jerusalem three or four times for Passover and other feasts (Jn 2:13; 5:1; 7:10; 12:12); the other three Gospels report only one journey to the holy city, the one that ended in his arrest and death. According to the fourth Gospel, Jesus carried on a baptismal ministry at the same time as that of John the Baptist; the three Synoptic Gospels locate John's entire activity prior to that of Jesus (see Mt 4:12; Mk 1:14; Lk 3:1—4:15; and Jn 3:24).

Most importantly, the material in the majority of John's chapters is unknown to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, who nonetheless abound in sayings and stories; this cannot be explained as forgetfulness on either side. Finally, John's style has nothing in common with that of the other three. In the Synoptics, Jesus speaks in short, carefully wrought sentences that were easy to remember and to pass on orally; the Gospel of John, on the other hand, always starts with a solemn gesture of Jesus and follows with lengthy discourses that are marked by a careful and complex progression.

The Synoptic Problem

In contrast to John, the first three Gospels have much in common. They report the Christ-event according to the same pattern. In addition, the texts are similar, and each frequently follows the other two even in the details of images and sayings. This similarity makes it possible to read these three Gospels together, in parallel columns; we can read them "synoptically," that is, "seeing them together or at the same time" (Greek: *synopsis*), whence the name "Synoptic Gospels" or "Synoptics." In fact, of the 661 verses in Mark, 600 are found in Matthew and 350 in Luke.

At the same time, however, there are major differences. Matthew and Luke have many passages in common that are completely unknown to Mark. In addition, each Gospel has a sizable group of texts that are found only in it.

B: The New Law*

The Fulfillment of the Law. ¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not a single letter,* not even a tiny portion of a letter, will disappear from the Law until all things have been accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore, whoever breaks even one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever observes these commandments and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ I tell you, if your righteousness does not exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Anger.* ²¹ “You have heard that your ancestors were told: ‘You shall not kill, and anyone who kills will be subject to judgment.’ ²² But I say this to you: Anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment, and whoever addresses his brother in an insulting way will answer for it before the Sanhedrin, and whoever calls his brother a fool will be liable to the fires of Gehenna.*

²³ “Therefore, when offering your gift at the altar, if you should remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there at the altar and first go to be reconciled with your brother. Then return and offer your gift.

²⁵ “Come to terms quickly with your opponent while you are on the way to court with him. If you fail to do so, he may hand you over to the

judge, and the judge will put you in the custody of the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Believe the truth of what I tell you: you will not be given your freedom until you have paid your debt down to the last penny.*

Adultery. ²⁷ * “You have heard that it was said of old: ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸ But I say to you that anyone who looks with lust at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is preferable for you to lose one part of your body than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is preferable for you to lose one of your limbs than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna.

Divorce. ³¹ “It has also been said: ‘Whoever divorces his wife shall give her a certificate of dismissal.’ ³² But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except if the marriage was unlawful, causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Oaths.* ³³ “Again, you have heard that our ancestors were told: ‘Do not swear falsely, but fulfill the vows you have made to the Lord.’ ³⁴ But what I tell you is this: Do not swear at all, either by heaven, since it is God’s throne, ³⁵ or by earth, since that is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, since that is the city of the great King. ³⁶ Nor should you swear by your head, for you cannot turn one hair of it white or black. ³⁷ All

you need to do is to say 'Yes' if you mean 'Yes' and 'No' if you mean 'No.' Anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

Retaliation.* ³⁸ "You have heard that it was said: 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'³⁹ But I say to you: Offer no resistance to someone who is wicked. If someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn and offer him the other cheek as well. ⁴⁰ If anyone wishes to sue you to gain possession of your tunic, give him your cloak as well. ⁴¹ If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him for a second mile. ⁴² Give to anyone who begs from you, and do not turn your back on anyone who wishes to borrow from you.

Love for Enemies.* ⁴³ "You have heard that it was said: 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'⁴⁴ But I say to you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. ⁴⁵ This will make you children of your heavenly Father. For he causes his sun to rise on evil people as well as on those who are good, and his rain falls on both the righteous and the wicked. ⁴⁶ If you love only those who love you, what reward will you receive? Do not even tax collectors* do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brethren, what about that is so extraordinary? Even the pagans do as much.

Perfection.* ⁴⁸ "Therefore, strive to be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.

C: The True Practice of Religion*

CHAPTER 6

Giving Alms in Secret. ¹ "Beware of performing righteous deeds before

others in order to impress them. If you do so, you will receive no reward from your Father in heaven. ² Therefore, whenever you give alms, do not trumpet your generosity, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets in order to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have already received their reward. ³ But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. ⁴ Your almsgiving must be done in secret. And your Father who sees everything that is done in secret will reward you.

Praying in Secret. ⁵ "Whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may observe them doing so. Amen, I say to you, they have already received their reward. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees everything that is done in secret will reward you.

The Lord's Prayer.* ⁷ "When you pray do not go on babbling endlessly as the pagans do, for they believe that they are more likely to be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not imitate them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹ "This is how you should pray:

'Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come.
Your will be done

on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our debts

dence of God (Ex 3); the theophany that here begins the New Testament reveals something of the inner life of God: God is three persons. The dove perhaps suggests the Creator Spirit (Gen 1:2), but may also symbolize the divine goodwill that was restored after the flood (Gen 8:8-12), or the very People of God (Hos 7:11; 11:11; Isa 60:8), the formation of which is the work of the Spirit.

3:15 *All that righteousness demands:* i.e., all observances, everything that is part of God's plan. Jesus obeys the Father's will in everything (Phil 2:8).

3:17 This heavenly pronouncement intermingles language from Ps 2:7 and Isa 42:1, prophetic terminology that was well known to those with Messianic expectations (see Mt 17:5; Mk 1:11; 9:7; Lk 3:22; 9:35).

4:1-11 This important passage is again filled with echoes and citations of the Old Testament. The intention is to show the experience and struggles of the Messiah, the new head of the People of God. Just as Moses remained forty days on Sinai, so the Messiah remains forty days in the wilderness (Ex 34:28), forty days being symbolic of a time of preparation for divinely planned activities. Jesus refuses to make use of his miraculous power simply to relieve human need (v. 3f), or to satisfy requests of unbelievers (v. 5ff), or to embrace a Messianic role that would be purely political. The basic theme is the obedience of Jesus to God as he is known through the Old Testament. He rebuffs all three temptations with Scriptural truth from Deuteronomy.

4:3 *If you are the Son of God:* in the sense of the Messianic King of Ps 2.

4:4 A citation of Deut 8:3, indicating that the miracles of the Exodus were signs of God's religious care for Israel.

4:5 *Summit of the temple:* the southeast corner of the wall of the Jerusalem temple, projecting over a ravine.

4:6-7 The devil applies Ps 91:11-12 to the Messiah since it deals with God's protection of the righteous. Jesus declares (through the words of Deut 6:16) that we should not demand miracles from God as evidence of his care for us.

4:10 The citation (Deut 6:13) used by Jesus calls for the basic attitude of worship that everyone should have toward God.

4:12-25 By action and word Jesus inaugurates the kingdom of heaven. The phrase means the kingdom of God, but, like the Jews of his time, Matthew avoids naming God and says, instead, "heaven." This kingdom or reign is a power that will continue to make its way into the world from now on. Jesus begins his activity in Galilee, a northern province, which some, thinking of Isa 8:23 and 9:1, regarded as the Messiah's land. It was a region in which different populations and religions lived side by side. The faithful followers of Yahweh, who were pretty much cut off from Jerusalem and its temple, gathered in the synagogues. Different populations, even in the pagan Decapolis (a confederation of ten independent Greek cities, beyond the Jordan), acknowledge the Messiah.

4:12-17 *John had been arrested:* after John's arrest (v. 12), Jesus makes Capernaum the center of his activity (v. 13) and preaching (v. 17). The citation from Isa 9:1-2 identifies the ministry of Jesus as fulfilling the prophecy of the restoration of the northern kingdom defeated by

the Assyrians in 721 B.C. See notes on Mk 1:14 and Lk 3:20.

4:13 *Capernaum:* on the shore of the Lake (in Hebrew: Sea) of Galilee (v. 18), also known as the Lake of Tiberias or Gennesaret, in territory that had belonged to the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali.

4:18-22 We see the first Church being born; disciples follow the Lord not only to share intimacy with him but to be *fishers of men*, to be witnesses to him and gather together people in his name—for he is the Messiah. Three of the four (Simon, James, and John) will go on to hold a closer relationship with Jesus (see Mt 17:1; 26:37; Lk 8:51).

4:23-25 As a conclusion to the first part of his Gospel, Matthew gives a summary of Jesus' ministry, which consisted in teaching, preaching, and healing (v. 23; see also Mt 9:35).

4:24 *Syria:* the area north of Galilee, between Damascus and the Mediterranean Sea.

4:25 *Decapolis* (i.e., the Ten Cities): a league of Greek cities; all were east of the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River except Sythcopolis (Beth Shan).

5:1—7:28 The Sermon on the Mount is the first of five great discourses in this Gospel (chs. 5—7; 10; 13; 18; 24—25). The Lucan parallel is the "Sermon on the Plain" (Lk 6:20-49), although some of the sayings in the "Sermon on the Mount" have parallels in other parts of Luke. Matthew's Sermon contains beatitudes or declarations of blessedness (5:1-12), admonitions (5:13-20; 6:1-7, 23), and contrasts between Jesus' moral teaching and Jewish legislative traditions (5:21-48).

Matthew here presents a catechism of Christian initiation and opposes it to the Jewish religious ideal. The ensemble of moral, social, religious, cultural, general, and collective requirements that holds good for the whole People of God was received by Moses on Mount Sinai. Jesus presents a new charter that he gives "on the Mount" (5:1) as if on a new Sinai. It does not take anything away from the Law but goes to the root of human conduct. Good intentions are not to replace act and obedience, but all that takes place in the heart and spirit of persons, their plans and their intentions, are already acts.

5:1-12 The Beatitudes have been rightly termed "Eight Words for Eternity." If we read them carefully, we will realize that the happiness proclaimed by Jesus is poles apart from what we habitually think, say, and do. In the first three Beatitudes are listed the faults that must be corrected if human beings are to be perfect—spiritual arrogance, pride, and desire for pleasure. In the next three Beatitudes are found the virtues that must regulate our relations with God, our neighbor, and ourselves—justice, mercy, and purity. In the last two Beatitudes, Christ urges his followers to be zealous in spreading the Gospel and peace, and he promises that they will be rewarded with honor and power in the kingdom of God for all that they have had to suffer for him.

5:13-16 Only the certitude that God comes into our very midst can open up a horizon to our human condition. But where can we read the testimony of such a coming if not in the experience of the disciples? We cannot receive Jesus or discern the Father unless we strive to lead better lives.

5:17-48 The Gospel of Matthew wants to stress the point that Jesus has no contempt for "the Law or the

Prophets" (= the Old Testament); on the contrary, he takes them very seriously. But throughout his life he felt free to proclaim the true meaning of the Law by placing himself above even Moses. In his view, the Law is good, and there is nothing to discuss. In contrast to the commonly accepted rules, Jesus does not deal with secondary details; the essentials, on the other hand, cause no problem; therefore he does not discuss the Law. Instead, he goes farther and deeper, down into the human heart.

5:18 *Single letter*: literally, *iota* (Greek) = Hebrew *yod*, the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet. *Tiny portion of a letter*: literally, the *apex* or tip of a letter, the bit that distinguishes similar letters.

5:21-26 Murderers must appear before the highest Jewish judicial body, the Sanhedrin, and they deserve death and the fire, symbolized by Gehenna, the valley southwest of Jerusalem that was the center for an idolatrous cult during the monarchy in which children were offered in sacrifice (see 2 Ki 23:10; Jer 7:31). To embrace the kingdom of God is to become a person of reconciliation, to free oneself of all murderous desires. Indeed, even when they suffer offenses but are innocent, the disciples of Jesus must have the courage to take the first step toward establishing peace.

5:22 *Gehenna*: a little valley southwest of Jerusalem and a popular image of hell because of the refuse that burned there continually.

5:26 *Penny*: the smallest Roman copper coin.

5:27-32 At this period, the laws on divorce were tolerant for husbands, intransigent for wives. Jesus rejects this inequality and confronts husbands with their responsibilities by radically condemning divorce. Matthew's text contains the clause, "except if the marriage was unlawful," which is lacking in the parallel passages of Luke and Mark, but occurs again in Mt 19:9. The Greek word *porneia*, "unchastity," is generic and so has given rise to much discussion. The widely accepted opinion among scholars today is that it was a technical term used by the Jewish Christian community to signify a degree of relationship that constituted an impediment to marriage according to the Law (Lev 18:6-18; Acts 15:29).

5:33-37 What good is multiplying oaths between God and human beings? Is this not a sign that lying and unbelief have perverted human realities? In the kingdom of God, the dialogue between persons will rediscover its truth and its loyalty.

5:38-42 The Old Testament commandment of an eye for an eye (see Lev 24:20) was intended to moderate vengeance—seeking to ensure that the punishment not exceed the injury done. Jesus calls for further moderation and liberality by giving suggestions for breaking the infernal circle of hatred and disputation.

5:43-47 Just as God invites the unrighteous to respond to him through the evidence of his love, so the disciples of Jesus must bear the same love toward their enemies.

5:46 *Tax collectors*: those who collected taxes on behalf of the occupying authorities; for this reason, and also because they engaged in fraud, they were regarded as public sinners.

5:48 The life of the kingdom is that of children of God; therein lies its secret and its demands (see Lev 11:43; Deut 18:13).

6:1—7:29 Almsgiving (vv. 2-4), prayer (vv. 5-15), and fasting (vv. 16-18) are characteristics of the Jewish reli-

gion, or of the "righteous." Jesus does not teach other practices but is concerned with the spirit of our religious acts so that they may lead to God's presence and bring the joy of being children of God. Believers do not vaunt themselves or make a show of their religion; they listen to God. True religion is authentic spiritual life rather than spectacle and confusion or human respect.

6:7-15 In response to a request from his disciples to teach them to pray (see Lk 11:1), Jesus entrusts them with the fundamental Christian prayer, the Our Father. It is also called the Lord's Prayer because it comes to us from the Lord Jesus, the master and model of prayer. The Lord's Prayer constitutes the summary of the whole Gospel, lies at the center of the Scriptures, and is the most perfect of prayers. The object of the first three petitions is the glory of the Father: the sanctification of his name, the coming of the kingdom, and the fulfillment of his will. The four others present our wants to him: they ask that our lives be nourished, healed of sin, and made victorious in the struggle of good over evil.

6:13 *Temptation*: in the New Testament, temptation is a test in which Satan tries to destroy the believer. Consequently, it cannot be attributed to God. God, however, can give the strength and means of overcoming it: this is the meaning of the petition. The Semitic expression "do not lead us into" is therefore to be understood as meaning "do not allow us to enter into or succumb to temptation" (see Mt 26:41; 1 Tim 6:9).

6:16-18 Fasting is an action that evinces a desire to live more closely in the disinterested service of God; this produces profound joy. The sole fast prescribed by the Mosaic Law was that of the Day of Atonement (see Lev 16:31), but in later Judaism fasting became a regular practice (see *Didache* 9:1).

6:19-21 In this and the two following texts Jesus is responding to the faulty side of our way of thinking and acting. In order to affirm the primacy of God so simply and surely, we must live unceasingly in the presence of the Father. Those who guard their inner freedom, the desire for light, understand Jesus. But it is impossible to be open to God when desire for possessions has become the motivating force of one's life.

6:22-23 Those with good vision can readily direct their bodily movements. Similarly, those who utilize the prophetic vision of Christ can direct their way to God.

6:24 *Money*: literally, "Mammon" (an Aramaic word), a personification of wealth.

6:25-34 Jesus warns us against making real human needs the object of overly anxious cares and thus becoming enslaved by them. The remedy for such an attitude is to seek first God's kingdom and to show confidence in God's providence.

7:1-5 Those who judge others separate themselves from their neighbors; those who love them are completely present to their neighbors. God has not given us consciences to judge others but to judge ourselves.

7:6 Jesus stresses the point that teaching should be given in accordance with the spiritual capacity of the learners. *Dogs*: unclean dogs of the street were held in low esteem.

7:7-11 To acknowledge God as Father one must have the audacity to pray and the certitude that this appeal is not in vain, for the disciple seeks the One whom he knows as Love.

That will be proof for them.”*
⁴⁵ However, he went forth and began to proclaim the entire story, spreading the word far and wide. As a result, Jesus could no longer go openly into any town. Rather, he stayed outside in deserted places, and people continued to come to him from every quarter.

B: First Oppositions*

CHAPTER 2

Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man.

¹ When Jesus returned some days later to Capernaum, the word quickly spread that he was at home. ² Such large multitudes gathered there that no longer was any space available, even in front of the door, and he was preaching the word to them.

³ Some people arrived, bringing to him a man who was paralyzed, carried by four men. ⁴ Since they were unable to bring him near Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above him and then lowered the bed on which the paralyzed man was lying.

⁵ On perceiving their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” ⁶ Now some scribes* were sitting there, thinking to themselves: ⁷ “How can this man say such things? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

⁸ Jesus was able immediately to discern in his spirit what they were thinking, and he asked, “Why do you entertain such thoughts in your hearts? ⁹ Which is easier: to say to the paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say: ‘Stand up, take your mat, and walk?’ ¹⁰ But

that you may come to realize that the Son of Man* has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralyzed man—¹¹ “I say to you, stand up, take your bed, and go to your home.” ¹² The man stood up, immediately picked up his bed, and went off in full view of all of them. The onlookers were all astonished and they glorified God, saying, “We have never before witnessed anything like this.”

Jesus Calls Levi (Matthew). ¹³ Once again Jesus went out to the shore of the lake,* and as a large crowd came to him, he taught them. ¹⁴ As he was walking along, he saw Levi* the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector’s booth. Jesus said to him, “Follow me,” and he got up and followed him.

Jesus Eats with Sinners. ¹⁵ When he was sitting at dinner in his* house, many tax collectors and sinners were seated with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed Jesus. ¹⁶ Some scribes who were Pharisees noticed that Jesus was eating with sinners and tax collectors, and they asked his disciples, “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹⁷ When Jesus overheard this remark, he said, “It is not the healthy who need a physician, but rather those who are sick. I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.”

A Time of Joy and Grace.* ¹⁸ John’s disciples and the Pharisees were observing a fast. Some people came to Jesus and asked, “Why do John’s disciples and those of the Pharisees fast but your disciples do not do so?” ¹⁹ Jesus answered, “How can