

⁸ E.g., *La Bible de Jerusalem*.

⁹ *Apoc.* v. 6, 11, 12; vii. 17.

¹⁰ *John* vii. 40, 41.

¹¹ *John* vii. 46.

¹² *Exod.* xxiii. 14-17.

¹³ *Lv.* xxiii. 33-44.

¹⁴ *Zach.* xiv. 8, 16, 17.

¹⁵ Durrwell, *The Resurrection*, p. 80.

¹⁶ *Isa.* xii. 3.

¹⁷ *John* xx. 19, 20, 22.

¹⁸ *John* xiv. 31.

¹⁹ By the three hundreds, Pentecost had evolved into an exceptionally important feast.

²⁰ The Canon of the Mass.

²¹ *Mt.* xxvi. 26-29; *Mk.* xiv. 22-25; *Lk.* xx. 14-20; *I Cor.* xi. 23-6; cf. Charles Burgard, *Scripture in the Liturgy*, Westminster, 1960, pp. 81-2.

THE HISTORY OF SALVATION

The sacredness of the Bible lies in its nature as the revealed word of God. The narratives of the Scriptures, however, contain events which extend over many thousands of years; contain oral and written traditions collected and transmitted by varied human authors of different times and places. Nevertheless, there is a unity in scriptural revelation which is from God Himself. As divine author, He inspired the human writers to convey the sacred message He intended. These human authors over the centuries ranged from patriarchs to kings, from prophets to priests, from lawyers to apostles. The sum of the story which these writings tell is a divine history: the story of God's dealings with men—the History of Salvation. Through this sketch runs the thread of divine mercy with unfaithful mankind. This article is presented as an outline to indicate the unity of the Bible. In the margin next to the text, the books of the Bible are listed which are connected with the period of history there discussed.

IN THE BEGINNING, God alone existed. He was perfect, completely happy in Himself, and certainly had no need of any creatures outside of Himself. Yet, in His unsearchable plans, He wanted to make

Genesis

creatures who would share in His happiness. And so, just as He willed, He created all other beings, both those material creatures which we see with our eyes, and also the spiritual beings which we cannot see.

The material universe He fashioned according to a wonderful and orderly plan; after the lower forms had been made, finally He created man. This creature "man" was very special: into his body was breathed a spirit of life which was truly an image of his Maker.

The first humans, Adam and Eve, led a very pleasant existence; moreover, they enjoyed a truly supernatural familiarity with God. Nonetheless, before they could enter into the complete happiness of their Lord, they had to prove themselves worthy.

As we know, Adam failed. He chose to have for himself the knowledge of good and evil—he tried to become as God. Because of this sin, he lost for himself and his descendants that special state of happiness and closeness to God which he had enjoyed. Human nature was now wounded, and the task of working out eternal happiness became very perilous.

Nevertheless God did not just punish; He promised to heal the wound—to send a Saviour who would lead men back to happiness. The remainder of the Bible is concerned with this promise of restoring men to God's friendship. For this sums up the entire history of revelation: God, Who made man, bought man back from the slavery of sin.

As we have seen, Adam broke the first bond which God had made; nevertheless the Lord still offered him and his posterity

a promise of salvation. But Adam's descendants did not show themselves worthy of even this. They fell into ever more serious sinning, until eventually the whole race of men was corrupt. God became sorry that He had even made men. But one just man appeased His wrath: Noe was found worthy, and through him God rescued mankind, and renewed His pledge of good will toward men.

Yet, as time went on, even this bond was ignored, and men all lapsed into sin again. Therefore, God chose a new method of preserving His promises. He selected one individual, Abraham, and made a covenant with him so that through his posterity the hope of a Saviour might be kept alive. From this point onwards (beginning of second millennium B.C.), the history of God's message is quite clear and detailed.

The promises were renewed again to Isaac, and then to Jacob or Israel. Thenceforth, salvation is bound up with the fate of this people. Thus the remainder of the Old Testament is concerned with the Covenant between God and Abraham's descendants.

When this family had migrated to Egypt because of a famine, God blessed them and they grew into a populous tribe. But a change of dynasties in Egypt brought persecution; they cried out to their Lord, and He freed them according to His pledge. While enroute to their promised homeland, God, through Moses, renewed the covenant of Abraham with them. But this new testament, namely that of Sinai, was more particular, and regulated how this elected people was

Exodus

*Leviticus, Numbers,
Deuteronomy*

to remain faithful to its God, and how He, in turn, would bless them.

Josue

After forty years of wandering in the desert, the Israelites moved into Palestine, and more or less took possession of the country. The period which followed immediately may be called the period of the Judges. These "Judges" were men specially raised up by God to lead their fellow countrymen in times of great peril. Nevertheless, in time affairs became so disorganized, that the Israelites decided it would be better to have a king—one leader who could better defend them against their enemies. God reluctantly let them have their way, and the monarchy began under Saul. When he proved unfaithful, God chose David. After Saul's death, David gradually assumed control over the entire nation, and made it into a great and strong kingdom. David showed himself, with one exception, extraordinarily faithful to his Lord; in return he received the promise that the long-awaited Saviour would be born of his family.

*I Kings
II Kings
I Paralipomenon*

(Psalms)

*III Kings
II Paralipomenon*

Solomon reigned next; under him the kingdom reached its apex. In Jerusalem he built the temple of the Lord; yet toward the end of his reign, he fell into idolatry, the worst sin against the Covenant. In punishment, the nation was split by civil war, and two rival kingdoms appeared: that of Juda, and that of Israel.

*III and IV Kings
II Paralipomenon
(Judith)*

The period of the two kingdoms is, in general, a very sad one. Israel immediately followed its kings into the worship of false gods, and utter moral corruption was the sequel. And Juda was frequently enough not much better. Because Israel had broken

*Amos, Osee
(Jonas)*

the covenant, God withdrew His protection, and that kingdom was utterly wiped out by the Assyrians in the eighth century B.C., and its people led away captive. Judah too, after periods of alternate faithlessness and then of repentance, eventually failed its Lord, and it too was punished with destruction and banishment under the Babylonians. Yet this was also the period of the great prophets, men specially elected by God to point out the evils and call to repentance. Their prophecies also renewed the promise of a Saviour, and made ever more clear this Saviour's mission.

The captivity in Babylon lasted for seventy years. During this time the Law of the Lord did not fall into oblivion; rather, it was a time of true repentance. Thus, when they were set free by the Persians, the chosen people returned far more wholesome and spiritual than they had gone. In Jerusalem they began to rebuild the temple. When at last this was finished and the true worship of God was restored, a much clearer understanding of the promises of the Lord survived in Israel. Thereafter, until the coming of the Saviour, the Jews never again abandoned the Covenant of their God as they had done in the past.

The Greek influence after the time of Alexander the Great brought on serious new problems, for many of the Greek rulers introduced their paganism along with their culture. And so the Jews began their wars of independence under the leadership of the Machabees. Although these wars had been fairly successful, the later members of this dynasty compromised the good accomplished, and the kingdom drifted into an-

*Isaias, Micheas
Sophonias, Nabum,
Tobias, Habacuc
Jeremias, Lamentations,
Baruch*

*Ezekiel
Esther
Daniel
I and II Esdras
Aggeus
Zacharias
Abdias
Malachias
Joel
(Job)
Canticle of Canticles
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes*

*Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom,
I and II Machabees*

archy based on rival religious factions. In the end, the Romans intervened to settle the political discord. Through Roman favor, Herod the Great had himself established as king; and under him the fullness of time was accomplished for the realization of the promises made of old to Abraham and his posterity.

Gospels

The prophecies were fulfilled in a far more marvelous way than any man could ever have dreamed. For God saw fit to send His only Son into the world to save us from our sin. Conceived of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary, God became man. When He was circumcised, His name was called "Jesus," which means Saviour. After a hidden life of about thirty years, He began to preach His Gospel, that is, "good news": forgiveness of sin and eternal life for all who would believe and obey His commands. By means of many miracles, He confirmed His mission.

Gathering about Him, a group of believers, He preached His message of salvation throughout the land of Palestine. Yet there were many who rejected Him; some afraid He would take away their privileged place in the nation, some refusing to accept Him as the Son of God, others for still different reasons. Together His enemies plotted His death; after repudiating Him in their own tribunals, they succeeded in having Him executed by the Romans. And so the Saviour gave Himself up to be crucified. Thus did He satisfy God's offended justice. The pact of Sinai had now been finally rejected, and was made void; but a new covenant was be-

ginning—a covenant dedicated by the blood of the Son of God.

On the third day after His death, Christ arose, as He had foretold. After forty days spent in confirming and instructing His apostles, He ascended into heaven to take His place at the right hand of God.

The apostles, however, strengthened by the Holy Spirit, went forth to preach His name to all peoples. They confirmed their testimony, not only by miracles, but also by laying down their lives for His sake. Thus, to this day, their successors in the Church have carried the news of salvation to all men; and they will continue to do so until Christ comes again as judge, to lead the saved to eternal happiness with God.

Acts of the Apostles

*Epistles of St. Paul,
Catholic Epistles*

Apocalypse

—Humbert Gustina, O.P.

BE HOLY, FOR I, YAHWEH, YOUR GOD, AM HOLY

During the latter half of the thirteenth century before Christ, the nation of Israel wandered through the wilds of the desert lands south and east of the land of Canaan. This barren wilderness had seen roaming tribes for centuries—lone people passing here and there through the dangerous and desolate miles of dry and sterile hills and plains. But always these travelers had been quick to hasten on their way, anxious to leave the fruitless crags of nubby hills and the scorching paths of the burning sands. For Israel, the case was different.

It is true, the tribes of Israel were also on a journey. But unlike all the others who traveled the sands of the desert, Israel was not merely traveling from place to place. These Jewish tribes were traveling as well from tribal individualism to national unity. From Egypt they fled a tired