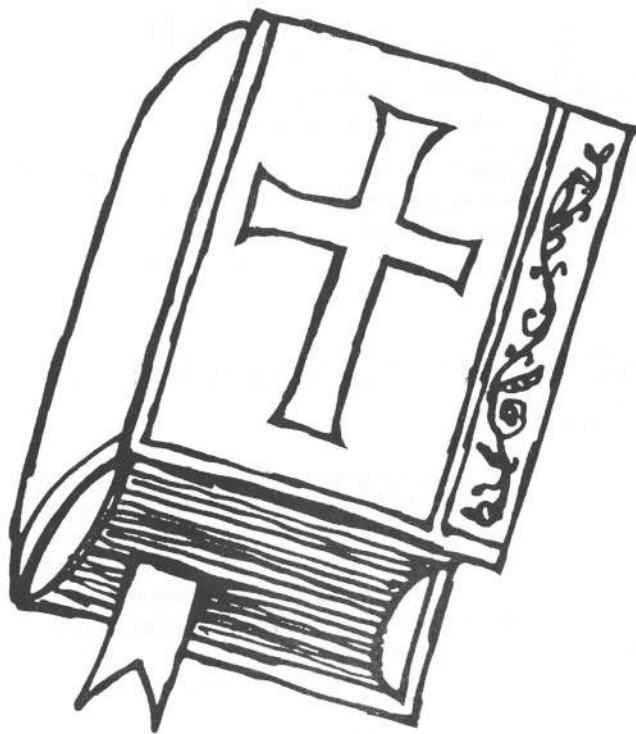


within himself, and threw himself into the lake, taking the place of the fortieth soldier.

Toward morning, they removed the bodies of the forty from the lake, burned them, and threw the remains back into the lake. The bishop saw the remains in a dream and had them gathered and buried with honors in the year 316. The forty young men became the most popular saints in the East.

A church with 40 cupolas was built in Sebastia in memory of the forty. The church was destroyed in the 14th century when Tamerlane, the renowned oriental conqueror, passed through Armenia. Later the cemetery in Sebastia was also called Karasoon. Mangoonk (The Forty Youths), since it was located on the site of that church.

The lake itself became confined to a small area, in the midst of the Turkish section of the city, where it was protected by stone walls built around and above it.



LOOKING AT THE BIBLE

With Holy Week and the Resurrection, we hear a large portion of the Four Gospels read in church during services. Let's take a closer look at the Four Gospels. (Future Bulletin issues will examine various translations of the Bible).

The New Testament is not strictly a history book, neither is it entirely a biography. How, then, can we possibly describe it? St. John is very helpful here. He tells us exactly why he wrote his Gospel.

"These are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life through His Name" (John 20:30)

John wanted his account of the life of Christ to be more than just a list of facts. He wanted it to lead men to a deeper knowledge of Christ.

There are two ways of telling a story. You can tell the story in minute detail, omitting nothing. This provides your listener with a simple timetable of events. Or you can tell a story by simply picking out the most significant incidents. This way your listener not only knows the most important things that happened but can also be given an insight into the meaning of these events.

Compare a photograph and a portrait. A photograph tells you only what a person looks like. A portrait tells you a great deal about his character...what he is really like deep down. The Gospel is not like a photograph of Christ; it is more like a portrait.

How, then, can we define a Gospel? We can say the Gospel is a portrait study of Christ. By putting before us the preaching of the Church about the public life, death and exaltation of our Lord, the Gospel gives us a true witness and account of His life. But something else—and we will have more to say about this. The Gospel is an inspired book. It is the word of God. It is God speaking to us.

To understand the gospels it is important to realize that they were not primarily written for *us*! They were each written with a particular type of reader in mind. For this reason, each Gospel has its own theme, purpose and emphasis.

Let's look briefly at each of the four.



THE GOSPEL OF ST. LUKE

Like the other Gospels, Luke's was intended primarily for Christians already familiar with the Gospel message but it also seeks to attract educated non-Christians. It was written in Greek and has an erudite style. It emphasizes that Christ is the Savior of all men and stresses the compassion of Jesus for the poor and outcast.



THE GOSPEL OF ST. MATTHEW

This Gospel has been described as the greatest book ever written. It is certainly the most familiar and probably the most popular of the four Gospels. Written with a fine sense of order and balance, it presents Christ as a great teacher who fulfills the Old Testament prophecies: the promised Messiah who completes God's plan. It was written primarily for Jewish converts and therefore, contains many references to the Old Testament. It was probably composed about 70 A.D. To get the flavor of this Gospel, read the Sermon on the Mount in chapters five through seven.



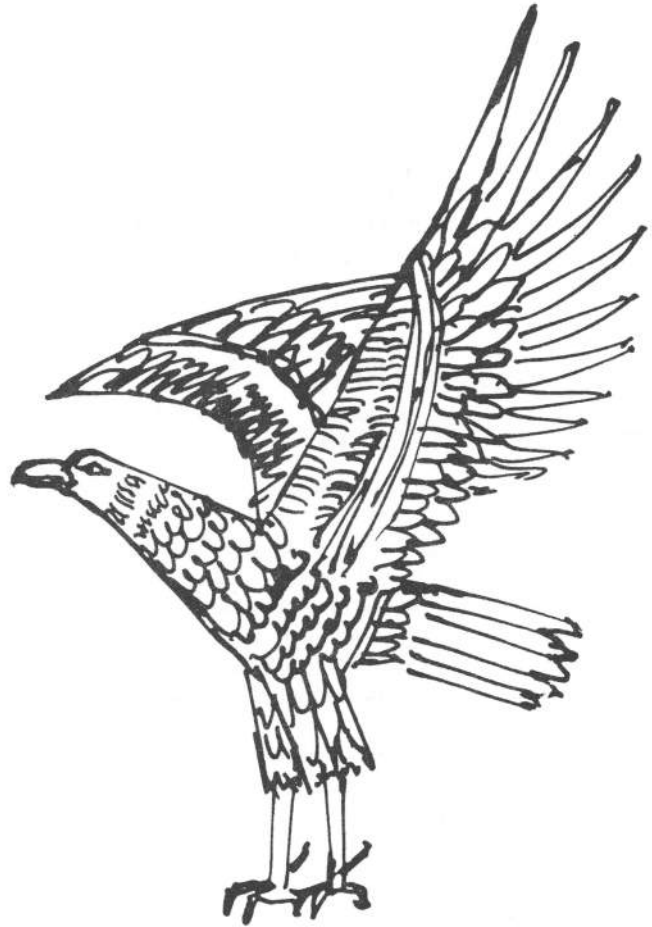
THE GOSPEL OF ST. MARK

There is an early Christian tradition that St. Mark was a follower of St. Peter in Rome. His Gospel was probably written there shortly before or after the death of Peter. It is thought that Mark's was the first of the Gospels to be written, probably about 64-67 A.D.

The Gospel was written primarily for Roman converts

who wanted a permanent record of the life of Christ as it had been taught to them. Because it was for Romans, Mark's Gospel contains many explanations of Jewish customs. It also explains the meaning of Aramaic words and expressions. The Old Testament is hardly ever quoted. It concentrates on Jesus the Son of God rather than as the Savior promised in the Old Testament.

Mark's Gospel is noted for the miracles it records. It is more a Gospel of action than of words. It is the shortest of the four and can easily be read at one sitting.



THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN

This Gospel of St. John shows a marked difference from the other three Gospels. All four evangelists select their material to suit their purpose, but this selection is most evident in John. The Gospel was written in Greek about 90 A.D. and bears the characteristics of an old man's reflections on past events, delving into their deeper meaning.

The purpose of this Gospel is "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God..." Although John's Gospel carefully places events in correct order, it would be a mistake to think of it as "straight reporting." With this Gospel more than the others, we should read between the lines.

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