

of God, and they contain a store of sublime teachings about Him, sound wisdom about human life, and a wonderful treasury of prayers. In these books the mystery of our salvation is present in a hidden way. Christians should receive them with reverence.

Unity of both Testaments

16. God, the inspirer and author of the books of both Testaments, wisely arranged that the New Testament be hidden in the Old and the Old made manifest in the New.²⁹ For, though Christ established the new covenant in His blood (cf. *Lk.* 22, 20; *1 Cor.* 11, 25), still the books of the Old Testament with all their parts, taken up into the proclamation of the Gospel,³⁰ acquire and show forth their full meaning in the New Testament (cf. *Mt.* 5, 17; *Lk.* 24, 27; *Rom.* 16, 25-26; *2 Cor.* 3, 14-16). And in turn they shed light on it and explain it.

CHAPTER V

THE NEW TESTAMENT

17. The word of God, which is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe (cf. *Rom.* 1, 16), is set forth and shows its power in a most excellent way in the writings of the New Testament. When the fullness of time arrived (cf. *Gal.* 4, 4), the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us in His fullness of grace and truth (cf. *Jn.* 1, 14). Christ established the kingdom of God on earth, manifesting His Father and Himself by deeds and words. He completed His work by His death, resurrection and glorious ascension and by the sending of the Holy Spirit. Having been lifted up from the earth, He draws all men to Himself (cf. *Jn.* 12, 32, Greek text), He who alone has the words

²⁹ St. Augustine, *Questions on the Heptateuch* 2, 73: PL 34, 623.

³⁰ St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* III, 21, 3: PG 7, 950; (Same as 25, 1: Harvey 2, p. 115). St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses* 4, 35: PG 33, 497. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *On Sophonia* 1, 4-6: PG 66, 452D-453A.

of eternal life (cf. *Jn.* 6, 68). This mystery had not been manifested to other generations as it was now revealed to His holy Apostles and Prophets in the Holy Spirit (cf. *Eph.* 3, 4-6, Greek text), so that they might preach the Gospel, stir up faith in Jesus, Christ and Lord, and gather the Church together. The New Testament writings stand as a perpetual and divine witness to these realities.

The Preeminence of the Gospels

18. It is common knowledge that the Gospels have a special preeminence, and rightly so, among all the Scriptures, even those of the New Testament. They are the principal witness to the life and teaching of the Incarnate Word, our Savior.

The Church has always and everywhere held and continues to hold that the four Gospels are of apostolic origin. What the Apostles preached in fulfillment of Christ's commission was afterwards conveyed to us in writing by them and by apostolic men, under the inspiration of the divine Spirit — the foundation of faith, namely, the fourfold Gospel according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.³¹

19. Holy Mother Church has firmly and with absolute constancy held and continues to hold that these four Gospels, whose historical character the Church unhesitatingly asserts, faithfully convey what Jesus Christ, while living among men, really did and taught for their eternal salvation until the day He was taken up (cf. *Acts* 1, 1). Indeed, after the Lord's ascension the Apostles imparted to their hearers what He had said and done. They did this with that clearer understanding which they enjoyed³² after experiencing the glorious events of Christ's life and being taught by the light of the Spirit of truth.³³ The sacred authors wrote the four Gospels, selecting some things from the many which had been handed on by word of mouth or in writing, reducing some to a synthesis or explicating them in view of the situation of their churches, and preserving the form of proclamation, but always in such

³¹ Cf. St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* III, 11, 8: *PG* 7, 885; ed. Sagnard, p. 194.

³² *Jn.* 2, 22; 12, 16; cf. 14, 26; 16, 12-13; 7, 39.

³³ Cf. *Jn.* 14, 26; 16, 13.

fashion that they told us the honest truth about Jesus.³⁴ Their intention in writing was that from their own memory and recollections, or from the witness of those who “themselves from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word,” we might know “the truth” concerning those matters about which we have been instructed (cf. *Lk.* 1, 2-4).

Other New Testament Writings

20. In addition to the four Gospels, the canon of the New Testament also contains the epistles of St. Paul and other apostolic writings, composed under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. By these writings, according to the wise plan of God, those matters concerning Christ the Lord are confirmed; His true teaching is more and more fully stated; the saving power of His divine work is preached; the story is recounted of the beginnings of the Church and its marvelous growth, and its glorious fulfillment foretold.

For the Lord Jesus was with His Apostles as He had promised (cf. *Mt.* 28, 20) and He sent them the advocate Spirit to lead them into the fullness of truth (cf. *Jn.* 16, 13).

CHAPTER VI

SACRED SCRIPTURE IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

21. The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as it venerates the body of the Lord, since from the table of both God's word and Christ's body it unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life, especially in the sacred liturgy. It has always held and continues to hold that together with Sacred Tradition they are the supreme rule of faith. Inspired by God and committed once and for all to writing, they impart the word of God Himself without change, and make the Holy Spirit's voice resound in the words of the Prophets and

³⁴ Cf. Instruction *Sancta Mater Ecclesia* edited by Pontifical Biblical Commission: *AAS* (1964) p. 715 [cf. *TPS X*, p. 88].