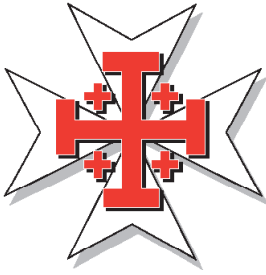




LAND OF THE PROMISE





*Biblical Culture Review
by the
Maltese Franciscans*

First year: 2010

*Layout:
John Abela ofm
Setting:
Raymond Camilleri ofm*

**VOL 1 NO 3
JUNE 2010**

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COVER

*Cloister of the first friary on
Mt. Sion. Today this friary is a
Yeshiva occupied by the Jews.*

HOLY LAND CUSTOS RECONFIRMED

Noel Muscat ofm

On 22nd May 2010, six years after the decree of his nomination by the Holy See (15th May 2004), fr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa ofm has been reconfirmed as Custos of the Holy Land for the next three years with a decree of the Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor, Fr. José Rodríguez Carballo, communicated officially by Fr. Francesco Bravi, Visitor General to the Holy Land Custody. According to the legislation of the Order of Friars Minor, the Holy Land Custos is the Minister Provincial of the friars of the Holy Land, and thus is chosen for a six-year mandate, that can be renewed for a further three years. The Custos of the Holy Land is nominated by the Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor, after consultation with the friars of the Holy Land, but the choice of the candidate has to be confirmed by the Segreteria di Stato of the Holy See, given the importance that the Father Custos has as the official representative of the Catholic Church regarding the Holy Places in front of civil and religious authorities.

Fr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa was born at Cologna al Serio, province of Bergamo, on 21st April 1965. He entered the Franciscan Order in the Province of Christ the King of Bologna on 22nd September 1984 in the novitiate house of La Verna, made his solemn profession on 14th October 1989 and was ordained priest on 15th September 1990. He obtained his BA in theology in 1990 at the Pontificium Athenaeum Antonianum (nowadays the Pontificia Università Antonianum). After his ordination he continued his studies at the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum of Jerusalem in 1990-1993, obtaining a Licentiate in Biblical Theology. Between 1993 and



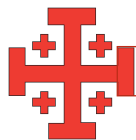
1999 he specialized in modern Hebrew and Holy Scripture at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He was vicar of the Catholic Hebrew-speaking community in Jerusalem, and also general assistant to Mons. Jean-Baptiste Gourion, Auxiliary Bishop of the Latin Patriarch for the Catholic Hebrew-speaking community. In 2001 he became superior at the friary of Saints Simeon and Anne in Jerusalem, where he was residing when he was elected Custos of the Holy Land.

Fr. Pierbattista has welcomed Pope Benedict XVI twice in the Holy Land, in 2009 when the Pope visited Israel and the Palestinian Territories on a pilgrimage, and this year when the Pope visits the island of Cyprus, which formally forms part of the Latin Patriarchal diocese of Jerusalem and of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land.

On 1st July 2008 Fr. Pierbattista welcomed the ex-President of Malta, Dr. Edward Fenech Adami and his wife Mary, who were on a private visit and pilgrimage to the Holy Land, in the company of Fr. Anthony Chircop ofm, Commissary of the Holy Land in Malta. On that occasion Fr. Pierbattista decorated the Maltese ex-President with the gold medal of the pilgrim.

In April Pope Benedict XVI nominated Mgr. William Shomaly as Auxiliary Bishop to the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. Fr. Shomaly was born in Beit Sahour (Bethlehem) in 1950. He entered the Latin Patriarchate Seminary at Beit Jala and was ordained priest on 24th June 1972. As a priest he ministered in Jordan. He has a doctorate in Liturgy acquired at the Pontifical University of Saint Anselm in Rome, as well as a degree in English Literature. Mgr. Shomaly was Rector of the Latin Patriarchate Seminary and Chancellor of the Latin Patriarchate.

The Episcopal consecration of Mgr. William Shomali takes place in the Franciscan parish church of Santa Catharina *ad Nativitatem* in Bethlehem on 27th May 2010.



THE COENACULUM, BIRTHPLACE OF THE HOLY LAND CUSTODY

The Coenaculum, or Upper Room, is the sacred place where Jesus celebrated the Last Supper on Holy Thursday, where he appeared as the Risen Lord to the apostles on the evening of Easter Sunday, and to Thomas on the following Sunday, and where the Holy Spirit descended upon Mary and the Apostles on Pentecost. For this reason the Coenaculum is considered to be the mother of all churches.

The area where the *Coenaculum* is found is known as Mount Zion. In Jerusalem, however, there are two places that have this name. For the Jews Mount Zion refers to the temple mount, whereas for the Christians Mount Zion is the place where the *Coenaculum* is found. The fact that the *Coenaculum* has always been considered as an Upper Room comes from Luke's Gospel 22:12. According to the evangelist Jesus sent Peter and John to prepare the Last Supper in an "upper room" (ἀνάγειον). This detail has always remained evident in the indication of the *Coenaculum* as the Upper Room.

Bishop Epiphanius of Salamis (310-403) writes that when emperor Adrian destroyed Jerusalem in AD 135, he left standing only a few houses and the church of the Upper Room where the disciples gathered after the Lord ascended into heaven. This hill, on the western section of Jerusalem, was spared destruction. In the same area

the Christians also commemorated the apostle Saint James, first bishop of Jerusalem, who is venerated in the Armenian Orthodox cathedral, a short distance away from the *Coenaculum*. The church mentioned by Epiphanius was restored by Saint Maximus (331-349). Bishop John II of Jerusalem (386-417) rebuilt it. During Byzantine times it used to be known as *Hagia Sion* (Holy Zion). In 384 the pilgrim Egeria describes the liturgy celebrated in the church of Zion.

Jewish tradition has it that Zion refers to the city of David. From 415 to 460 Byzantine Christians commemorated on Mount Zion the tomb of Saint Stephen, until the remains of the first martyr were transferred to the basilica built in his honour by bishop Juvenal and empress Eudoxia. The ancient pilgrims state that in the *Hagia Zion* Christians also venerated the column of the Flagellation and the Crown of thorns.

On Mount Zion the tradition stating that king David had been buried at the place was to gain popularity later on, particularly from the time of the Crusaders in the 12th century. In fact, according to 1Kings 2:10: "David slept with his ancestors and was buried in the Citadel of David." Now the city of David was not to be found on the present-day Mount Zion, but rather on the Ophel hill, south of the temple mount. Maybe the words of Peter in



View of the Upper Room

Acts 2:29 continued to fuel confusion in the attribution of Mount Zion as the place where David was buried. On Pentecost Peter announced to the Jews, gathered close to the Upper Room: “David himself is dead and buried: his tomb is still with us.” Some archaeologists have maintained that the walls enclosing the empty Crusader cenotaph of King David, underneath the *Coenaculum*, date back from Roman times, and could very well have

been the walls of a synagogue, which was transformed into a place of prayer by Judaeo-Christians.

In 614 the Persians destroyed the church of *Hagia Zion*. It remained in ruins until the arrival of the Crusades in 1099. They found that the Upper Room was still standing. The Crusades built a new basilica on the place of the *Hagia Zion*, and they called it *Mater Omnium Ecclesiarum* (Mother of All Churches). It was a large basilica with



three aisles. The north aisle enclosed the sacred place of the Dormition of the Virgin Mary, whereas the *Coenaculum* was enshrined in the south-western corner. The Crusaders probably gave the *Coenaculum* its actual structure, at least in its fundamental aspects, namely a two-storey edifice, with the Upper Room and the chapel of the washing of the apostles' feet and the apparitions of the Risen Christ underneath (the modern-day synagogue, with the cenotaph of king David). The basilica of Mount Zion was officiated by the Augustinian Canons Regular.

celebrate Mass. In 1294, however, the Dominican pilgrim Ricoldo di Monte Croce wrote that the basilica was partially in ruins and that it had become a mosque. The Upper Room was probably left as a Christian place of worship.

In 1333, brother Roger Garin, a Franciscan from the Aquitaine province, came to live in Jerusalem at the Hospital of Saint John, close to the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre. Through the kind services of lady Margaret, a Sicilian benefactress, who on 15th May 1335 bought the entire property of Mount Zion from the Treasury, and bequeathed parts of it to brother



The Franciscans officiate in the Coenaculum twice a year

When Saladin took over Jerusalem from the Crusades in 1187, he did not destroy the basilica of Mount Zion, but permitted the local Syrian clergy to officiate it. Pilgrims could still visit the *Coenaculum* and

Roger on 19th September 1335, as well as through the personal interest of King Robert of Anjou and his wife Sancha of Majorca, sovereigns of Naples, of whom brother Roger was representative, the Franciscans even-



tually acquired the entire property on Mount Zion on 1st February 1337, and settled down in a small friary that they built by the Upper Room. From Papal Bulls founding the Custody of the Holy Land we come to know that the sovereigns of Naples had entered into negotiations with the Sultan of Egypt Malik al Nasir Mohammed, and that the Franciscans had now entered in possession of the Upper Room, the Chapel of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, and the Chapel of the Apparition of the Risen Christ, and that the sovereigns of Naples had provided for the support of 12 Franciscan priests and 3 lay brothers to settle down in the friary of Mount Zion, and to officiate at the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre and in Bethlehem. It could very well be that the present structure of the *Coenaculum* in gothic style is the direct result of the intervention of the friars who restored the Upper Room with the help of architects brought over from Cyprus, although they had to leave the Chapel of the Descent of the Holy Spirit in ruins. The original friary of the *Coenaculum* can still be seen in the small cloister on the lower level, where visitors enter to see the cenotaph of king David. The superior of the Franciscan community was called “Guardian of Mount Zion”, and this is the title that the Custos of the Holy Land still bears to this very day.

On 21st November 1342, Pope Clement VI wrote two *Bullae* from Avignon, bearing the titles *Gratias agimus* and *Nuper carissimæ*. These two documents mark the beginning of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, and are an indelible proof of the

fact that the Franciscan friars are the proprietors of the *Coenaculum* and of the entire property underneath it and alongside it, including the small cloister and friary. The text of *Gratias agimus*, among other things, states: “A short time ago good news from the king and queen reached our Apostolic See relating that, at great cost and following difficult negotiations, they had obtained a concession from the sultan of Babylon (that is, Cairo), who to the intense shame of Christians occupies the Holy Sepulchre of the Lord and the other Holy Places beyond the sea that were sanctified by the blood of the same Redeemer, to will that friars of your Order may reside continuously in the church known as the Sepulchre and celebrate there solemn sung Masses and the divine office in the manner of the several friars of this Order who are already present in this place; moreover, this same sultan has also conceded to the king and queen the Cenacle of the Lord, the chapel where the Holy Spirit was manifested to the apostles and the other chapel in which Christ appeared to the apostles after his resurrection, in the presence of blessed Thomas; and also the news of how the queen built a convent on Mount Zion where, as is known, the Cenacle and the said chapels are located; where for some time she has had the intention of supporting twelve friars of your Order to assure the divine Liturgy in the church of the Holy Sepulchre, along with three laymen charged with serving the friars and seeing to their needs” (English translation in PIERBATTISTA PIZZABALLA, CUSTOS OF THE HOLY LAND, *The Franciscan Presence in the*



Holy Land, Franciscan Printing Press, Jerusalem 2008, 6).

Unfortunately the presence of the Franciscans on Mount Zion was always a matter of intense persecution against them by both Muslims and Jews, on account of the common belief that king David was buried below the Upper Room. In 1377 the persecution against the Franciscans started in earnest. In 1429 the Franciscans were briefly expelled from the chapel of the Apparition of the Risen Christ, where the cenotaph of David is situated. Brother James Delfin (1434-1438) restored the *Coenaculum* and rebuilt the ruined Chapel of the Holy Spirit. Persecutions, however, did not subside. In 1462 the Franciscans were completely expelled from the lower level, namely the chapel of the Apparition of the Risen Christ. After intense pressure from the Muslims, in 1490 the Franciscans had to demolish the chapel of the Descent of the Holy Spirit and cede the place to the Muslims.

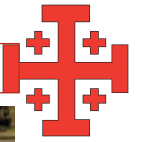
The definite eviction of the Franciscans from the *Coenaculum* occurred after the Ottoman Turks took over the control of Palestine in 1517. The Muslims began to protest in front of the imperial court at Constantinople, stating that the liturgies of the Christians in the Upper Room were a profanation of infidels against the sacredness of a Muslim holy site. In 1524 the Franciscans were forced to leave the Upper Room and some parts of the friary, but they held on until 1551, when they were totally evicted and had to take refuge in a section of the complex, adjacent to the

Coenaculum, called “the bakery”. In 1560, after continual harassment, they were also forced out of this place, and hence had to leave Mount Zion and go to live in the Georgian monastery of El-Amud, which gradually grew to become the modern-day complex of Saint Saviour’s Monastery, where the Custos of the Holy Land began to reside in his official headquarters, while still retaining the legitimate right to the title of Guardian of Mount Zion.

In 1936 the Franciscans again succeeded in buying back from the Muslims the buildings of the area known as “the bakery”, and there they built a small church and chapel known as “San Francesco al Cenacolo”. In this way they went back to Mount Zion and settled very close to the Upper Room. Until 1948 it was prohibited for Christians to enter the Upper Room to visit and pray. Indeed, the *mihrab* still visible in the *Coenaculum* is a sign that the Upper Room was converted into a Muslim place of worship for nearly four centuries.

In 1948 the area of Mount Zion passed into Israeli sovereignty, and the complex soon became a synagogue and a centre for a *Yeshiva*. However, Christian pilgrims and visitors were allowed to visit the Upper Room, but not to pray officially or celebrate the Eucharist. The chapel of the Apparition of the Risen Christ was declared a synagogue and a holy place of Jewish worship, enshrining the cenotaph of king David. The Franciscan mediaeval friary was taken over by the *Yeshiva*.

Negotiations have been underway for a long time between the

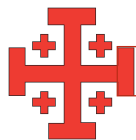


The Pope and the Custos (on the right) in the Holy Sepulchre during Benedict XVI's visit to the Holy Land

Catholic Church and the State of Israel regarding the *Coenaculum* complex. The Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land declares itself as the sole proprietor of the entire complex, to the exclusion of all other Catholic and Orthodox institutions. The Franciscans officially visit the *Coenaculum* on Holy Thursday and Pentecost, where they are allowed to organise public acts of

cult, but not the Mass. Pope John Paul II celebrated Mass in the Upper Room when he visited the Holy Land as a pilgrim in 2000, whereas both Pope Paul VI and Pope Benedict XVI visited the *Coenaculum* and prayed in this holy place. In May 2009 Pope Benedict XVI was officially welcomed at the Upper Room by the Father Custos of the Holy Land.





THE MONASTERY OF THE HOLY CROSS IN JERUSALEM

The Monastery of the Holy Cross is one of the most famous monasteries of Jerusalem, as well as being an important sanctuary especially for the Greek Orthodox Church. It is found in the new city of Jerusalem, along the valley called in Hebrew Emeq HaMatzlevah, or the Valley of the Cross. Just two kilometres away from the walls of the old city of Jerusalem, it lies just below the hill upon which the Knesset and the Israeli Museum stand. The Arabic name for the monastery is Derelem Mussalaben.



The Monastery of the Holy Cross

There are many traditions linked with the foundation of the Monastery of the Holy Cross, and it is not always easy to verify which, among them, are the most true. Many believe that the monastery was built during the times of Emperor Constantine, through the initiative of his mother Helena, who came to the Holy Land in 326 and built three basilicas on the three mystical grottos, namely the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem, and the Basilica of Eleona on the Mount of Olives. This last basilica does not exist any more, except for some remains and the grotto in which Jesus taught his disciples the prayer of the Our Father.

It could be more probable, however, that the Monastery of the Cross was built later by Emperor Justinian (527-565), who also rebuilt the



*Entrance to
the Monastery
of the Holy Cross*



Nativity Basilica in Bethlehem according to the form that we can still see today. According to another tradition it was Emperor Heraclius I (610-641) who built the monastery. In fact, both Saint Helena and Emperor Heraclius I are linked with the events concerning the relics of the Cross. It was Saint Helena who found the relics of the Cross during her pilgrimage to the Holy Places in AD 326. In the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre we venerate this event in the crypt under the church of Saint Helena, which was a cistern and still

shows the signs of quarrying in the Golgotha area. This crypt, which is the property of the Franciscans, is the place where the annual feast of the Finding of the Cross is celebrated on 7th May. Helena took part of the relics of the Cross to the Basilica of *Santa Croce in Gerusalemme* in Rome, and left the other part in Jerusalem. In the year 614 King Cosroe II of Persia occupied Jerusalem and destroyed many churches. He also stole and profaned the relics of the Cross. That was the reason why the Byzantine Emperor



Heraclius I called a crusade against the Persians and brought back triumphantly to Jerusalem the relics of the Cross in 628. This event is marked by the liturgical feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross that is celebrated on 14th September. According to tradition, Heraclius I, after returning triumphant from Persia, pitched camp in the area where today the Monastery of the Cross stands. He carried with him the relics of the Cross and then introduced them triumphantly on Calvary. In honour of the Cross he decided to build a monastery in the place where he had pitched camp, outside the walls of Jerusalem.

The only certitude we have regarding the foundation of the

Monastery of the Cross is that it was built during the period of the Byzantine rule in Palestine (326-638). This is confirmed not only by ecclesiastical tradition, but also by archaeological evidence and documents of the period. Dositheus, Patriarch of Jerusalem, says that Justinian had built a monastery in Jerusalem, and thus we can conclude that he is referring to the monastery of the Holy Cross.

The monastery is dedicated to the Holy Cross because, according to an ancient tradition, this was the place where the tree that was used to make the Cross of Jesus grew. The information regarding this tree is found in various ecclesiastical traditions, especially in ancient documents in the Syrian language.

Interior of the Church of the Holy Cross



The story narrates that the patriarch Abraham was the founder of this tradition. When God appeared to him at the Oak of Mamre (Gen 18:1-15) under the form of three angels, before leaving for Sodom, in order to punish that city because of its sins (Gen 18:16-21), they left their three staffs with Abraham. After the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot, who was Abraham's nephew, escaped with his



wife and two daughters, but his wife looked back and was transformed into a pillar of salt (Gen 19:23-26). The two daughters made their father Lot drink strong wine, and then slept with him and through incest they bore two sons in order to give descendants to their father. These two sons were called Ammon and Moab, and they became rival enemies of Israel, living on the Transjordanian plateau (Gen 19:30-38). After these facts Lot went to live in Uad-el-Moualape, and there he asked God to forgive him for having succumbed to the sin of incest. Lot also asked Abraham to indicate to him a way by which he could expiate his sin and gain forgiveness. Abraham gave the three staffs of the angels to Lot, and asked him to plant them outside Jerusalem. He also told him to water them with water from the river Jordan. If these staffs would sprout, then that would be a sign that God had forgiven Lot, if not that he had not been forgiven. The devil tried to hinder Lot from watering these staffs as Abraham had advised him to do, but did not succeed. After some time these staffs sprouted and had roots, and grew into a large tree with three branches, a pine, a cypress, and a cedar.

According to the same tradition, Pontius Pilate, Roman Governor of Judaea, who condemned Christ to death, ordered that the Cross of Jesus had to be cut from the cursed wood of these trees, so that Jesus would suffer more because of the harsh wood, and the same wood of the Cross would be even more cursed. In this description we find a symbolic representation of the words of Galatians 3:13: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by being cursed for our sake, since scripture says: Cursed be everyone who is hanged on a tree." This is a quotation of Deuteronomy 21:22-23: "If a man guilty of a capital offence is

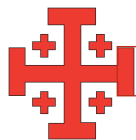
put to death and you hang him on a tree, his body must not remain on the tree overnight; you must bury him the same day, for one who has been hanged is accursed of God, and you must not defile the land that the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance."

The church of the monastery of the Holy Cross is the property of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem. It was originally dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Later on it was dedicated to Saints Constantine and Saint Helena, and to the Holy Cross. The church is a basilica in the form of a Cross, with a central dome and two smaller domes. The church is 15.50 metres long and 14.24 metres wide. The style of the church was common in the Byzantine Empire during the 7th century. This is an important factor, since it gives us precious information regarding as to when the Monastery of the Holy Cross was built.

Many of the mosaics and frescoes that adorn the church of the Monastery of the Holy Cross go back to the 11th century. No great alternations have been added to the church after that date, except for some repairs in the dome in 1644 and the iconostasis during the 19th century. The mosaic floor indicates two levels, one being the original level of the 6th century and the other one dating from the 11th century.

At the back of the church there is an altar that commemorates the event of the wood of the Holy Cross.

In its present structure the Monastery dates from the 11th century, when it was given its present form by monks coming from Mount Athos, with the help of the king of Georgia. The Monastery belonged to the Georgians during the middle ages, but in 1685 it was taken over by Greek Orthodox monks.



SAINT JAMES, BISHOP OF JERUSALEM

On 3rd May the liturgy of the Church of Jerusalem celebrates Saint James, Apostle, and first Bishop of Jerusalem. According to tradition Iacobus, sobrinus Domini, filius Alphæi, Ecclesiam Herosolymitanam rexit; epistolam scripsit; vitam egit asperam et multos Iudæos ad fidem convertit; martyrio coronatus est anno 62 (James, relative of the Lord, son of Alphaeus, was leader of the Church of Jerusalem; he wrote an epistle; he led a harsh life and converted many Jews to the faith; he was crowned with martyrdom in the year 62).

These historical details on Saint James, however, are at most an oversimplification of a very complex personage, or maybe the result of various persons who bore the name of James in the NT. Our aim is that of trying to reconcile liturgical tradition with historical truth regarding James, Bishop of Jerusalem.

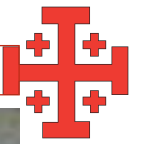
THE IDENTITY OF JAMES

In the NT there are various persons who bear the name James: (1) James the apostle, son of Zebedee and brother of the apostle John (Mt 10:2; Mk 3:17; Lk 6:14), known also as “James the Greater”, who suffered martyrdom under Herod Agrippa I in AD 44, and who is venerated in a special way in Compostella in Spain; (2) James

son of Alphaeus, apostle (Mt 10,3: Mk 3:18; Lk 6:15; Acts 1:13); (3) James, brother of the Lord (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3; Gal 1:19), who is also identified with James mentioned in Gal 2:2; 2:9; Acts 12:17; 15:13ff; 21:18; 1Cor 15:7; (4) James, son of Mary, and brother of Joseph, or Joset (Mk 15:40), where he is also called “James the Younger”, being also mentioned in Mt 27:56, and who could very well be the son of Clopas (Jn 19:25), where “Mary of Clopas” could be translated as “Mary the wife of Clopas”, since married women used to be identified with the addition of the names of their husbands; (5) James, brother of Judas (Jude 1:1), Jude being identified by many Catholic commentators of the Bible with “Judas son of James” or “Judas brother of James” (Lk 6:16; Acts 1:13), since his brother James was famous in the primitive Church of Jerusalem.

The identity of the apostle James, son of Alphaeus (2) and James brother of the Lord (3) and first bishop of the Church of Jerusalem (Acts 15:21), is probable, even though it is contested by many scholars, and there is no absolute certainty about it. In the Catholic tradition and interpretation, this identity is considered as certain, particularly if one bases his arguments on Gal 1:19: “I did not see any of the other apostles; I only saw James, the brother of the Lord.”

We can certainly identify James



St. James, the brother of the Lord

brother of Judas (5) with James brother of the Lord (3) and first bishop of Jerusalem. The identification of James brother of the Lord (3) and James son



of Mary, and maybe also son of Clopas (4), presents some difficulty. Such an identification asks of us to know who was Mary mother of James (Mt 27:56; Mk 15:40), namely whether she was Mary wife of Clopas (Jn 19:25), in order that we may also understand the identity of Alphaeus (2) and Clopas (4). Regarding this last detail, it could be that Clopas and Alphaeus are a different transcription of the Aramaic *Halpai*. It is possible that the same person had two names. We find examples of this in the NT, particularly in the case of persons who had a Hebrew and a Greek name (Simon-Peter; Saul-Paul; Matthew-Levi). Thus it could be that the names Clopas and Alphaeus indicate the same person.

Although we do not possess certain evidence regarding the identity of James son of Alphaeus, James brother of the Lord, and James son of Mary of Clopas, common opinion holds that he was the same person, whom the NT describes under three different ways. On the basis of Gal 1:19; 2,9; 2,12, we can hold that the apostle James, son of Alphaeus, is the same James, brother of the Lord, and first bishop of Jerusalem, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles.

JAMES AND THE BROTHERS OF THE LORD

A group of persons in the NT are called “his brothers” or “brothers of the Lord” (Mt 12:46; 13:55; Mk 3:31-32; 6:3; Lk 8:19-20; Jn 2:12; 7:3-5; Acts 1:14; 1Cor 9:5). Four of these brothers are mentioned by name in parallel texts in Mt 13:55 and Mk 6:3 (where there is also a reference to “his sisters”). These are James (Gal 1:19), Joseph or Joset, Simon, and Jude.

Let us first look at the identity between James, Simon and Jude. James is without doubt the first bishop

of Jerusalem, as we have already seen (Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal 1:19; 2:9-12) and author of one of the canonical Catholic Letters of the NT. His identity with James the Younger (Mk 15:40) and with the apostle James son of Alphaeus (Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18), although contested by various Protestant critics, can be considered as certain.

In Gal 1:19 Paul presents James brother of the Lord as a member of the college of the apostles, which is normally understood as having been restricted to the twelve apostles chosen by Jesus. If James had such a great authority in the Church of Jerusalem (Acts 15:13; Gal 2:9), in such a way that in the case of Galatians he is mentioned even before Peter, this means that he certainly must have been a member of the college of the twelve apostles. Now we know that there were only two apostles who were called James: James son of Zebedee and James son of Alphaeus (Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18; Lk 6:16; Acts 1:13). James son of Zebedee was martyred in 44, that is, before the facts narrated in Acts 15:6ff and Gal 2:9-12. James brother of the Lord is therefore the apostle James son of Alphaeus, to whom these texts would refer.

When we compare Jn 19:25 with Mt 27:56 and Mk 15:40, we find that Mary of Clopas, sister of Mary mother of Jesus, is the same Mary who is mentioned as being the mother of James the Younger and of Joseph or Joset. Since married women were not normally distinguished by the addition of their father’s name, but rather by that of their husband, therefore Mary of Clopas should be regarded as Mary the wife of Clopas, and not as Mary daughter of Clopas. Moreover, the names of her sons and the order in which they are presented, from the elder to the younger, shows us that they were “brothers” of Jesus, that is,



his cousins according to the Hebrew custom. It could be that the names Clopas and Alphaeus refer to the same person since, as we have seen, they could be the transcription of the Aramaic name *Halpai*.

We do not possess any information regarding Joseph or Joset. Jude or

identifies himself as brother of James of Alphaeus.

Regarding Simon we cannot state much. Some commentators identify him with Simon who, according to the historian Egesippus, became bishop of Jerusalem after the martyrdom of James. In the tradition of the



St. James' Armenian Cathedral in Jerusalem

Judas is the author of one of the Catholic NT Letters (Jude 1:1). Catholic commentators identify him with “Judas of James”, that is, Judas brother of James (Lk 6:16; Acts 1:13), and he is also sometimes known as Thaddaeus (Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18). It was a normal custom in the Hellenistic culture that a person would be known by the addition of his brother’s, and not his father’s name, if his brother was well-known. This is the reason why Judas

Church of Jerusalem, Simon is identified with the anonymous disciple who accompanies Clopas to Emmaus, when the two disciples meet the Risen Christ on the evening of Easter Sunday. Therefore Clopas appears to be the father of Simon. Some commentators identify Simon with the apostle Simon Qan’ana (Mt 10:4; Mk 3:18) or Simon the Zealot (Lq 6:15; Acts 1:13). The fact that James, Judas Thaddaeus and Simon are mentioned after the other



apostles in the lists given by Mt 10:4-5; Mk 3:18; Lk 6:16; Acts 1:13, indicates the probability that they were all brothers.

What was the nature of the relation between Jesus and his “brothers”? The term “brothers” is applied in Semitic usage and in Scripture both to blood brothers, as well as to brothers from different marriages, and also to cousins or relatives of various grades (Gen 13:8; 14:14-16; Lev 10:4; 1Chron 15:5-10; 23:21-22). Some heretics of the first centuries held that the “brothers” of Jesus were, in fact, his brothers from the marriage between Mary and Joseph, and this opinion is also held by some Protestant scholars. In the orthodox tradition there are two opinions. The majority of the Greek Fathers of the Church, under the influence of the Apocryphal Gospels, consider that Jesus had “brothers” who were born to Joseph in a previous marriage, before he took Mary as his wife. Catholics, with some exceptions (Ambrose, Hilarius, Gregory



Statue of St. James in the Lateran, Rome

of Tours) maintain that these “brothers” were cousins of Jesus from the



marriage between Clopas and Mary, sister of Mary mother of Jesus. In this way Clopas would have been the brother of Saint Joseph, and Mary wife of Clopas, the sister of Mary mother of Jesus. In this case we would have a marriage between two brothers and two sisters.

REFERENCES TO JAMES IN ACTS AND IN THE PAULINE LETTERS

Once we have established the identity of James son of Alphaeus and James brother of the Lord, and once we have seen that he is the same apostle to whom the NT refers, we have to apply to him what the Bible suggests regarding his formation. The teaching that James (and his brother Judas) received was the same common teaching that all Jewish young men would receive, and was based upon the knowledge of Holy Scripture and the rigorous observance of the Torah. Many facts indicate that the Greek language and culture were spread all over Judaea and Galilee during the 1st century BC. We can thus conclude that the apostles, or at least the majority of them, were capable of reading and speaking both Aramaic and Greek. James followed Jesus as his apostle, together with his brother Judas. In the four lists of the apostles, James is also mentioned as the first among the third and last group of apostles (Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18; Lk 6:16; Acts 1:13). Regarding James we have no other information in the Gospels before the resurrection of Christ. In 1Cor 15:5-7 Saint Paul says that the Lord appeared to James before his ascension into heaven.

There are no further references to James until the time when Saint Paul, three years after his conversion in AD 37, returned to Jerusalem. The apostle states that, from among the apostles, he saw only Peter and James

the brother of the Lord (Gal 1:19; Acts 9:27). When Peter was miraculously freed from prison in AD 44, according to Acts 12:1-17, and he went to the house of Mary, mother of John Mark, before leaving Jerusalem he begged the community to inform James as to what had happened: "Tell James and the brothers" (Acts 12:17). These words indicate that Peter recognised in James the visible head of the Judaeo-Christian community of Jerusalem.

During the so-called Council of Jerusalem (AD 51) James is the one who has the final say after Peter has spoken. He declares that the Christians whom Paul had converted from the gentiles were not bound by the Law of Moses and were not obliged to the circumcision. At the same time, however, James begs them to observe some important norms and norms which were dear to the Jews, in order to maintain unity between the Church of the gentiles and the Church of the Judaeo-Christians (Acts 15:13ff). During the same occasion the "pillars" of the Church of Jerusalem, namely James, Cephas and John, "shook hands with Barnabas and me as a sign of partnership: we were to go to the pagans and they to the circumcised. The only thing they insisted on was that we should remember to help the poor, as indeed I was anxious to do" (Gal 2:9-10).

James showed respect towards the freedom of the Gentile-Christians from the Law of Moses, although he considered the observance of the Torah as being important for him and for the Judaeo-Christians of Jerusalem, not as a tough obligation, but rather as a continuation with the Jewish religion from which the Christian faith was born, while at the same time he declared: "we believe that we are saved in the same way as they are: through the grace of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 15:11).



During the incident at Antioch, to which Paul refers in Galatians 2:11-14, when Peter began to avoid the company of Gentile-Christians and not to have food with them, according to the same Paul this was the fault of “certain friends of James” (Gal 2:12), who the apostle also calls “false brothers” (Gal 2:4), who were insisting that nobody could be saved without circumcision and the Law of Moses. We know that James had not authorised anyone to utter such declarations, but in the Judaeo-Christian community of Jerusalem there were many converts from the party of the Pharisees who were very tough regarding the observance of the Jewish religion, and who saw in James the guarantee of the orthodoxy of the Jewish traditions in Christianity, and wanted to impose these traditions on the pagans who were also converted to Christianity.

James is also mentioned in Acts 21:17-26, when Paul went to Jerusalem after the third missionary journey in order to bring the offerings of the Churches of Macedonia and Achaia in favour of the poor members of the Church of Jerusalem. It was in that occasion, in AD 58, that Paul went to visit James, bishop of Jerusalem, who with the elders praised God for the wonders that Paul had accomplished among the pagans, but who also advised Paul to go to the temple and pay the expenses of a nazirite vow of seven men, in order that he would outwardly declare in front of the Jews that he had no problem in going to pray in the temple and in observing the Law of Moses.

THE LETTER OF JAMES

One of the so-called Catholic Letters of the NT has as its author the apostle James. When the Churches accepted the canonicity of this writing

they identified its author with James “brother of the Lord”, who exercised an important role in the Christian community of Jerusalem.

Such an attribution, in fact, is not without difficulties. First of all, although there does not seem to have been a problem regarding the canonical nature of the Letter in Egypt, and Origen quotes it as inspired Scripture, Eusebius of Caesarea, in the beginning of the 4th century admits that it was still under discussion as a canonical writing. In the Churches of Syria the Letter entered into the canon in the 4th century. In Africa it is not mentioned neither by Tertullian nor by Cyprian of Carthage. In Rome the Letter of James is not to be found in the Muratorian Canon, attributed to Saint Hippolytus (c. 200), and there is no certainty as to whether Clement of Rome and the Pastor of Hermas do in fact quote it.

If it is truly James who wrote this Letter, it is difficult to understand how it took 4 centuries for the Church to accept it among the canonical books of the NT. The Letter was written directly in Greek, with a certain elegance of style and a richness of vocabulary and rhetoric. All these details leave us with a doubt as to whether it could come out of the pen of a man from Galilee like James, even though he might have made use of the service of a disciple who was well versed in Hellenistic culture.

If we accept the authenticity of this Letter we have to place its composition before AD 62, the year which marks the date of the martyrdom of Saint James, bishop of Jerusalem. We know that the Letter of James betrays a contrast with the Letter to the Romans, since whereas Paul insists upon justification through faith, James insists upon faith that is made evident through good works. The Letter is addressed “to the twelve tribes of the



Throne of St. James in the Armenian Cathedral, Jerusalem

Dispersion” (Js 1:1), who were probably Christians of Jewish origin who lived in the “diaspora” of the Graeco-Roman world, especially in the regions close to Palestine, like Syria and Egypt. The use of Scripture in the Letter shows that these were Jews who were familiar with the Holy Scriptures of the OT, and the style of the Letter is inspired by the wisdom writings of Jewish tradition. At the same time, however, the Letter has many references to the Gospels, which is a sign

that the author of the Letter was familiar with Jesus and his message.

The contents of the Letter are various and are not necessarily interconnected. James speaks about the need that Christians accept trials (1:1-12; 5:7-11), about the origins of temptation (1:13-18), about the need that one would control his tongue (1:26; 3:1-12), about the importance of agreement and mercy (2:8.13; 3:13-4:2; 4:1ff), about the power of prayer (1:5-8; 4:2ff; 5:13-18). Saint James



gives us also a famous text regarding the sacrament of the anointing of the sick in 5:14-15: “If one of you is ill, he should send for the elders of the church, and they must anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord and pray over him. The prayer of faith will save the sick man and the Lord will raise him up again; and if he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven.”

In the section of the “parenthesis” the Letter speaks about two principal themes. It refers to the fact that God makes a preferential option for the poor and scolds the rich (1:9-11; 1:27-2:9; 4:13-5:6). It also shows the value of good works and admonishes against a dead faith that is not fruitful in good works (1:22-27; 2:10-26). Regarding this the Letter betrays some polemic tones that some biblical scholars consider as a criticism to the doctrine of Paul regarding justification through faith, and the lack of power of the works of the Laws in saving men. It could be that James does not intend to go against Paul’s doctrine, but against some Christians who were interpreting in an exaggerated and mistaken manner the teaching of the apostle of the Gentiles to the detriment of all efforts in favour of good works.

REFERENCES TO JAMES IN PRIMITIVE HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

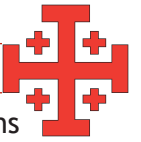
There are various traditions regarding James the Younger in documents that do not form part of the biblical canon. Let us mention a few. Among them we have Josephus Flavius, the Jewish historian, in the *Antiquitates Judaicae* XX, the “Gospel of the Jews” by St. Jerome, in Egesippus (quoted by Eusebius in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II), in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies (I,72-73), in Clement of Alexandria

(quoted by Eusebius in *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II). The universal witness of primitive Christianity agrees with the fact that James was bishop of Jerusalem. Egesippus, who was a Judaeo-Christian and who lived around the mid-2nd century, tells us that James was called “the just”, that he did not drink any wine or strong drink, that he did not eat meta, that he never shaved, that he never washed, that he anointed himself with fragrant oils, and that he suffered martyrdom by the Jews.

JAMES’ MARTYRDOM

According to Josephus Flavius, *Antiquitates Judaicae*, 20,9, James the brother of the Lord died after the death of the Roman Procurator Porcius Festus, but before the appointment of the Procurator Lucceius Albinus. It was AD 62. The high priest Ananias took advantage to summon the Sanhedrin and condemned James for going against the Torah and gave him martyrdom by stoning.

Eusebius of Caesarea also reminds us of the texts of Egesippus and Clement of Alexandria that speak about the martyrdom of James. The value of these narrations is great, since the Acts of the Apostles speak about James up till the year 60. After James’ martyrdom Vespasian laid siege and destroyed Jerusalem in the year 70. The bishop of Jerusalem who succeeded James was Simon. According to tradition, Simon was the son of Clopas, and he might have been the unnamed disciple that Luke presents as having accompanied Jesus and his father along the road to Emmaus on the evening of Easter Sunday. Therefore Simon was James’ brother and also Jesus’ cousin.



THE MEMORIES OF JAMES IN JERUSALEM

The mother Church of Jerusalem recalls to this very day in a special way the apostle Saint James the Younger, as her first bishop, particularly on the his feast day on 3rd May. The cathedral church of Saint James, which is the See of the Armenian Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, was built upon the tomb of Saint James, brother of the Lord. The church is a crusader church built in the 12th century, and it was restored by the Patriarch Gregory (1715-1749). The cathedral of Saint James is found in the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem, on the road that from Jaffa Gate leads to Zion Gate, from which one goes out to the Coenaculum and to the Dormition Basilica.

From the interior the cathedral has three small chapels on the left

hand side. The first chapel contains the tomb of Saint Macarius, bishop of Jerusalem during the Council of Nicea (325), who was instrumental in convincing Constantine and his mother Helena to rediscover the Holy Places that had been profaned by emperor Adrian, and to build the basilicas of Bethlehem and the Holy Sepulchre. The third chapel from the entrance to the sanctuary contains the relic of the head of Saint James the apostle, brother of Saint John. According to the Armenian tradition, James son of Zebedee was buried here after his martyrdom under King Herod Agrippa I.

On the presbytery there are two thrones. One of them contains a canopy, and marks the symbolic throne of Saint James, first bishop of Jerusalem, who is buried under the main altar. The second throne is that of the Armenian Orthodox Patriarch.

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***FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT
IN THE HOLY LAND***



*“ I have longed to eat
this Passover with you
before I suffer ”*

(Luke 22:15)



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