

## THE GOSPELS

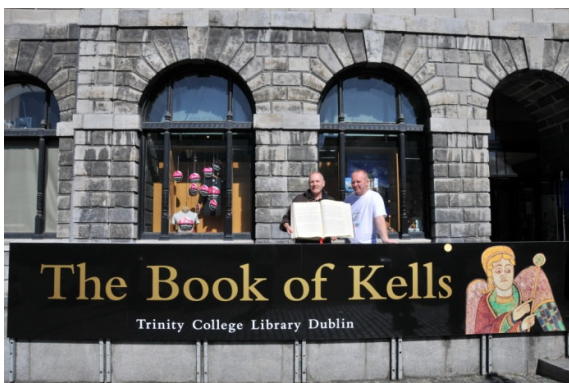
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Evangelism cannot take place without evangelists. Jesus is the Master Evangelist as the “God story” or “Good News” is a story about himself. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are four witnesses to the life and teachings of the Master. They are men who have a story to tell – not any old story, but the “God story”, communicated in the first place without ever being written down before A.D. 60 (Acts 20:35). As the church grows and spreads the need for a written record about the Lord Jesus becomes urgent as new converts need instruction in the Christian faith.



Evangelist 1 - Mark, sensing the urgency, records the story in written form. The way he writes suggests he’s got a deadline to meet and so Mark’s gospel is fast facts about Jesus. There is another reason Mark to get the sayings written down – for there will soon be a time when the last surviving eye witness of God in human flesh would be at rest.

Evangelist 2 - Luke follows with “The Gospel for the Gentiles”. He is a medical doctor with healing eyes that capture a picture of Jesus that is spot on. How limited our picture of God would be without the image of “The Father” running towards a far off and distant Prodigal son, who eventually meet and embrace each other with joy (Luke 15). Consider the comical, but immoral figure of Zacchaeus and witness how healing and reconciliation with God also brings peace with men (Luke 19). Walk with men on the road to Emmaus as confused minds find resolution and sheer joy as a result of a study on prophecy – “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” (Luke 24).



Evangelist 3 - Matthew, a Greek speaking Jewish Christian and with something of the Law still clinging to him writes for his fellow-countrymen. With the arrival of Jesus, “The Messiah” has truly arrived and all the teachings of the law, writings and prophets lead to this point. Matthew’s record of the Sermon on the Mount (thought to be a summary of many of Jesus’ sermons)

seeks to show how Christ’s authority is above that of the law (Matthew 5-8). “You have heard that it was said..., but I say to you” (Matt 5:21, 27, & 33 for example). As a listener of the mountainside audience then, or a reader of His recorded words today, it is possible that the rigidity and often well-meant outward piety of the Pharisees (of yester-year or today) can wear one down with guilt. Matthew (the

converted Jew) shows his reader many an example of Jesus making a yoke easy and burden light (Matthew 6:5-6, 12:1-8, 22:34-40, 23:1-36).

Evangelist 4 - John witnesses the life and teachings of Jesus – and the effect on his life changes everything that has gone before. With a long and deep Christian experience He reflects (for at least 40 years) about the nature of Jesus before recording his thoughts in written form. This gospel is the furthest away from the fast-facts edition written by Mark. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). This is deep, mysterious, and is the quest for truth. Such thoughts need prayer and contemplation. Not sterile philosophy, but about Jesus – the human face of God, fully God and fully man fused into one. Of all the gospels, John demonstrates the greatest level intimacy between Father and Son. “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9), and even deeper than that, for “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30) nowhere seen clearer than in the Gethsemane prayer (John 17) - more thoughts requiring deep reflection. In comparison with the other gospels, John makes us step back from the life and teachings of Jesus (as worthy as they are) but invites us to reverence the divine nature of Jesus – The Saviour of the World. “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the World (John 1).

Evangelist... you and me, today’s witnesses of the gospel, in the home, at school and college, in the workplace, at the club and in the cafe, on facebook and in the chat room. We too are witnesses to the gospel. Have you your own God-story to tell?

[All texts, English Standard Version. Photo: David Neal & Tony O'Rourke with the GC Travelling Bible outside Trinity College, Dublin where an early Irish Biblical Manuscript, The Book of Kells, is kept.]