

**MARIA VALTORTA READERS' GROUP
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GAMALIEL WITH YOUNG JESUS IN THE TEMPLE



GAMALIEL

GAMALIEL – WAITING FOR A SIGN TO BELIEVE

In contrast to the simple shepherds who unquestioningly believed that Jesus was the Messiah, the learned Rabbi Gamaliel wanted to believe but he kept waiting for a sign. The Holy Spirit describes Gamaliel as "...the rich, powerful and stately Gamaliel, similar to a King out of pomp...and the living book of wisdom for Israel." And later "Gamaliel ... a walking encyclopedia on all the doctrine of Israel. " And later again, "And the most just ones amongst the heads of Israel, one of them being Gamaliel, the greatest among the Rabbis of that time..." (*Lessons On The Epistle Of St. Paul To The Romans, pp. 42, 130, 290*)

JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

Gamaliel, surrounded by a compact group of disciples (who are broad-minded), is speaking of the coming of the Messiah, and founding his observations on Daniel's prophecy, he states that the Messiah must have already been born because the seventy prophesied weeks, from the time the decree of the reconstruction of the Temple was issued, expired some ten years before. Shammai (one of larger group known for its conservative and resentful intolerance) opposes him stating that, if it is true that the Temple has been rebuilt, it is also true that the slavery of Israel has increased and the peace, which He whom the prophets called « Prince of Peace » was to bring, is quite far from being in the world and in particular is far from Jerusalem. [...]

From the close group of the believers, the clear voice of a boy is heard: « Gamaliel is right. »

[...] I recognise my adolescent Jesus. He is sure of Himself and open-hearted, His eyes are sparkling with intelligence.

« Who are You? » they ask Him.

« I am a son of Israel, who has come to fulfill what the Law prescribes. »

« What is Your name? »

« Jesus of Nazareth. »

The feeling of benevolence fades away in Shammai's group. But Gamaliel, more benignly, continues his conversation with Hillel. It is indeed Gamaliel who with respect, suggests to the old man: « Ask the boy something. » [...]

Hillel: « Come near us that I may see You, Child, and my hope may be revived by Your faith and my soul enlightened by the brightness of Yours. »

And they make Jesus sit on a high stool between Gamaliel and Hillel, and they give Him some rolls to read and explain. It is a proper examination. The people throng and listen.

Jesus reads in His clear voice: « Be consoled, my people. Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and call to her that her time of service is ended [...] A voice cries in the wilderness: "Prepare a way for the Lord... then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed..." »

Jesus: « I speak thus. And thus I shall speak even to My death, because above Me there are the interests of the Lord and the love for Truth of which I am the Son. I solemnly tell you that there is Someone who is above the Prophets, and you do not know Him and you will not know Him because you do not want to. And I tell you that what I have said is true. [...] »

Hillel: « Listen to me, Child. Haggai says: "... The One Expected by the nations will come... great then shall be the glory of this house, and of this last one more than of the previous one". Does he perhaps refer to the Sanctuary of which You are speaking? »

Jesus: « Yes, master. That is what he means. Your honesty leads You towards the Light and I tell you: when the sacrifice of Christ is accomplished, you shall have peace because you are an Israelite without wickedness. »

Gamaliel: « Tell me, Jesus. [...] Speak and enlighten also me. » [...]

Jesus: « My hour has not come. Voices from Heaven speak to Me and in solitude, I must gather them until My hour comes. Then with My lips and My blood I will speak to Jerusalem, and the destiny of Prophets stoned and killed by her, will also be My destiny. [...] Wait for Me in My hour. These stones shall hear My voice again and vibrate hearing My last word.

(*Poem Vol. 1, pp. 214-19; Gospel Vol.1, pp.260-8*)

AT THE HOUSE OF LAZARUS

« Master... today there will be Nicodemus and... Gamaliel. Do You mind? »

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« Why should I? I acknowledge his wisdom. »

« Yes. He was anxious to see You... and he wanted to insist on his point of view. You know... ideas. He says that he has already seen the Messiah, and that he is waiting for the sign that He promised him, at His revelation. He also says that You are "a man of God". He does not say: "the Man". He says: "a man of God". A rabbinical subtlety, isn't it? You are not offended, are You? »

« Subtlety. You are right. We must bear with them. The best ones will prune by themselves all the superfluous branches that make them bear foliage and no fruit, and will come to Me. [...] Gamaliel's judgment is correct. He is a Pharisee and a doctor to the backbone, but still honest and just. »

Gamaliel is always stately in his snow-white robe which he wears with regal majesty. Joseph rushes to meet him and their reciprocal salutations are pompous exchanges of respect. Also Jesus is bowed and He bows to the great Rabbi who greets Him with the salutation: « The Lord be with You » to which Jesus replies: « And may His peace always be your companion. » Also Lazarus bows down and all the others do likewise.

Gamaliel is very dignified but not proud. He listens more than he speaks. But anyone can understand that he ponders on every word of Jesus and often looks at Him with his deep dark severe eyes. [...]

There is silence. Jesus turns to Gamaliel: « Are you not asking for miracles to believe? »

« It will not be the miracles of a man of God to remove the thorn I have in my heart, that is, three questions that are always without an answer. »

« Which questions? »

« Is the Messiah alive? Was it that one? Is it this one? Once... [...] when the great wise Hillel was still alive, we both believed that the Messiah was in Israel. [...] I said, after I heard those words: "Israel has been saved! As from today there will be abundance in the fields and blessings in our hearts! The Expected One has revealed Himself in His first refulgence." » [...]

« Who spoke them? » asks Jesus

« One... a little more than a child... but God was shining on His innocent gentle face... I have been thinking of it and remembering it for the last nineteen years... and I try to hear that voice again... that spoke words of wisdom... In which part of the world does He now live? I ponder... He was God. In the appearance of a little boy in order not to frighten men. He, the Divine Being, in His appearance of merciful beauty, with the face and voice of a child and a divine mind, wanders on the earth to say to men: "I am". So I think... When will He come back to Israel?... When? And I think: when Israel will become the altar for His feet; and my heart moans seeing the abjection of Israel: never. Oh! What a harsh reply! But true! Can the Holiness descend into Its Messiah as long as there is abomination amongst us? »

« It can and does descend, because it is Mercy » replies Jesus.

Gamaliel looks at Him pensively and then asks: « What is Your true Name? »

And Jesus stands up, stately, and says: « I am Who I am. The Thought and the Word of the Father. I am the Messiah of the Lord. »

« You?... I cannot believe it. Great is Your Holiness. But that Child, in whom I do believe, said then: "I will give a

sign... These stones will vibrate when My hour comes". I am awaiting that hour to believe. Can you give it to me, to convince me that You are the Expected One? » [...]

He exclaims: « You want that sign? And you will have it! I repeat the far off words: "The stones of the Temple of the Lord will vibrate hearing My last words". Wait for that sign, doctor of Israel, a just man, and then believe, if you wish to be forgiven and saved. Blessed before time, if you could believe before! But you cannot. Centuries of wrong beliefs, on a just promise, and heaps of pride, are your bulwark against Truth and Faith. »

« You are right. I will wait for that sign. Goodbye. The Lord be with You. »

« Goodbye, Gamaliel. May the Eternal Spirit enlighten you and guide you. »

(Poem Vol. 1 pp. 607-12; Gospel Vol.2 pp. 241-7)

MEETING WITH RABBI GAMALIEL

WHO INVITES JESUS TO SHARE A MEAL

Jesus is beside Gamaliel who is alone on one side of the table. The Zealot is in front of Jesus. After the prayer of thanksgiving, which Gamaliel says with calm solemnity, the servants carve the lamb and divide it among the guests and they fill the cups with wine or water sweetened with honey, for those who prefer it.

« We have met by chance, Rabbi. I was never expecting to see You on the way to Giscala. »

« I am going towards the whole world. »

« Yes, You are the indefatigable Prophet. John (the Baptist) is the stationary one, You are the roaming One. »

« It is easier, therefore, for souls to find Me. »

« I would not say so. Your continuous moving about disorients them. »

« I disorientate My enemies. But those who want Me, because they love the Word of God, find Me. Not everybody can come to the Master. And the Master, Who wants everybody, goes to everybody, helping thus the good and warding off the conspiracies of those who hate Me. »

« Are You referring to me? I do not hate You. »

« Not to you. But since you are just and frank, you can say that I am speaking the truth. »

« Yes, it is so. But... see... The fact is that we old people do not understand You well. »

« Yes, old Israel does not understand Me well. That is her misfortune... and because of her will. »

« No, no. »

« Yes, Rabbi. They are not willing to understand the Master. And who confines himself to that, does evil, but a comparative evil. Many instead deliberately misunderstand and distort My word to harm God. »

« God? He is above human snares. »

« Yes. But every soul that goes astray or is led astray (and it is misleading to distort My word or My work, both with regard to oneself and to other people) harms God in the soul which is lost. Every soul that is lost is a wound to God. »

Gamaliel lowers his head, and closing his eyes, he meditates. He then presses his forehead between his long thin fingers in an involuntary gesture of pain. Jesus watches him. Gamaliel raises his head, opens his eyes, looks at Jesus and says: « But You know that I am not one of those. »

« I know. But you are one of the former. »

« Oh! It is true. But it is not true that I am not willing to understand You. The truth is that Your word stops on my mind and does not penetrate farther. My mind admires it as the word of a learned man, and the spirit... »

« And the spirit cannot receive it, Gamaliel, because it is encumbered with too many things. And ruined things. »

« I understand. We are ruins, too... I understand the parable, Jesus. But... I cannot... I cannot... do otherwise. The stones are too heavy. »

« One in Whom you believed said to you: "The stones shall vibrate hearing My last words". But why wait for the last words of the Messiah? Will you not regret that you did not follow Me before? The last!... Sad words, like those of a friend who is dying, and to whom we have to listen, but too late. But My words are more important than the words of a friend. »

« You are right... But I cannot. I am waiting for that sign, that I may believe. »

Gamaliel is silent, engrossed in thought. The meal is over.

(Poem Vol. 2, pp. 73-8; Gospel Vol. 3, pp. 11-16)

MEETING HERMAS AND STEPHEN

Isaac goes away and comes back with the two disciples.

« Peace to you. Has the apostolic word seemed so true to you that you have decided to join it? »

« Yes, and Yours above all. Do not send us away, Master. »

« Why should I? »

« Because we are disciples of Gamaliel. »

« So what? I honour the great Gamaliel and I would like him to be with Me because he is worthy of it. That is all he lacks to make his wisdom perfect. What did he say to you when you left him? Because you certainly said goodbye to him. »

« Yes, he said to us: "You are lucky that you can believe. Pray that I may forget in order to remember." »

[...] Jesus explains: « He wants to forget his wisdom to take on Mine. He wants to forget that he is Rabbi Gamaliel to remember that he is a son of Israel awaiting the Christ. He wants to forget himself, to remember the Truth. »

« Gamaliel is not untruthful, Master » replies Hermas apologetically.

« No, he is not. But it is the medley of poor human words which is untruthful. Words taking the place of the Word. You must forget them, divesting yourselves of them and come to the Truth as pure as virgins in order to be reclothed and fecundated. Humility is required for that. »

(Poem Vol.2, 752-3; Gospel Vol. 4, pp.350-1)

HERMAS AND STEPHEN ARE QUESTIONED

And they go towards the town, talking. And many ask Stephen and Hermas many questions, as they are both placed in a very favourable light in the eyes of the Israelites because they are Gamaliel's dearest pupils. Many ask: « But what does Gamaliel say about Him? » and some: « Did he send you? » and some: « Did he not regret losing you? » or: « What does the Master say of the great Rabbi? »

The two disciples reply patiently: « Gamaliel speaks of Jesus of Nazareth as of the greatest man in Israel. »

« What? Greater than Moses? » exclaim some, who are almost scandalised.

« He says that Moses is one of the many precursors of the Christ. But he is only the servant of the Christ. »

« So, according to Gamaliel, this man is the Christ? Is that what he says? If Rabbi Gamaliel says that, the matter is settled. He is the Christ! »

« He does not say that. He cannot yet believe that, unfortunately for him. But he says that the Christ is on the earth, because he spoke to Him many years ago. Both he and wise Hillel. And he is waiting for the sign that Christ promised him so that he may recognise Him » says Hermas. *(Poem Vol. 3, pp. 438-9; Gospel Vol. 5, pp. 405-6)*

IN BETHANY. AT THE HOME OF THE SICK LAZARUS

« And what do You think, Master? »

« Gamaliel is a "man". A limited man close to infinite God. Man is so limited in thought, that unless he breathes in a supernatural atmosphere, he can accept one idea only, with which he becomes encrusted and remains forever. And he does so even against evidence, stubbornly and obstinately, even out of faith in what has struck him most. Gamaliel, after all, has faith in the Messiah, like few people in Israel whom he recognised and of whom he got a glimpse in a Child. And he is faithful to the words of that Child... The good I give will bear much good if it falls on humble ground, which will remain humble. But if it falls on proud ground or which becomes proud because of the gift received, then the good turns into evil. Gamaliel was granted one of the first manifestations of the Christ. It was to be his early call to the Christ. That is why he is deaf to My Voice calling him. »

(Poem Vol.3, p.534; Gospel Vol. 6, p. 33)

A MEETING WITH SIMON & JOSEPH OF ALPHEUS

Jesus says: « Gamaliel... is not My disciple and will never be while I am in this world. But he is a just man. Well, is Gamaliel perhaps among those who tempt you and Me with regard to the poor human kingdom? »

« Oh! No! Stephen said that the Rabbi, when he heard what happened at Chuza's house, exclaimed: "My spirit startles as I ask myself whether He can really be what He says. The Child whom I heard said that slavery and royalty will not be as we believed them, misunderstanding the prophets, that is, material, but spiritual, thanks to the Christ, the Redeemer from Sin and founder of the Kingdom of God in souls. I remember those words. And I judge the Rabbi by them. If in judging Him I should find out that He is inferior to that height, I would reject Him as a sinner and a liar. And I trembled seeing the hope, which the Child had put into them, dissolve into nothing" » says Simon.

« Yes, but in the meantime he does not say that He is the Messiah » remarks Joseph.

« Gamaliel is waiting for a sign, so he says » replies Simon.

« Give him it, then! And make it a powerful one. »

« I will give him what I promised him. But not now. In the meantime you may go to the feast. I am not coming publicly, as a Rabbi, as a prophet, to impose Myself, because it is not yet My hour. »

(Poem Vol. 4, p. 418; Gospel Vol. 7, p. 391)

AT THE TEMPLE

Jesus goes into the Temple. He is with His apostles and with a very large number of disciples, Gamaliel elbows his way through those who have stayed. He arrives near Jesus, Who is still absorbed in prayer, far from the crowd and the place, and calls Him: « Rabbi Jesus! »

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« What do you want, Rabbi Gamaliel? » asks Jesus looking up, His eyes still absorbed in an internal vision.

« An explanation from You. »

« Tell Me. »

« Go away, all of you! » orders Gamaliel, and in such a tone that apostles, disciples, followers, curious people and Gamaliel's very disciples, move aside quickly. Jesus and Gamaliel are alone, facing each other. And they look at each other. Jesus is, as usual, meek and kind, Gamaliel unintentionally authoritative and proud looking. A countenance certainly due to years of exaggerated homage.

« Master... Some words of Yours have been related to me. You spoke them at a banquet... of which I disapproved because it was not a genuine one. I fight or I do not fight, but always openly... I meditated on those words. I compared them with the ones which are in my memory... And I have been waiting for You, here, to ask You about them... But first I wanted to hear You speak... They have not understood. I hope I will be able to understand. I wrote Your words while You were speaking, so that I may meditate on them, not to injure You. Do You believe me? »

« Yes, I do. And may the Most High make them blaze in your spirit. »

« Let it be so. Listen. The stones which are to vibrate, are they perhaps those of our hearts? »

« No, Rabbi. These (and He points at the walls of the Temple with a rotary motion of His hand). Why are you asking Me? »

« Because my heart vibrated when the words You spoke at the banquet and Your replies to the tempters were related to me. I thought that throbbing was the sign... »

« No, Rabbi. The throbbing of your heart and of the hearts of a few more people is too little to be the sign which leaves no doubts... Even if you, with rare judgment of humble knowledge of yourself, define your heart: stone. Oh! Rabbi Gamaliel, can you really not make of your petrified heart a bright altar receiving God? Not for My benefit, Rabbi. But that your justice may be complete... »

And Jesus looks kindly at the elderly master who ruffles his beard and inserts his fingers under his head-dress pressing his forehead and whispering with his head lowered: « I cannot... Not yet... But I hope... Will You still give that sign? »

« Yes, I will. »

« Goodbye, Rabbi Jesus. »

« May the Lord come to you, Rabbi Gamaliel. »

They part. Jesus nods to His disciples and leaves the Temple with them.

(Poem Vol. 4, 468-70; Gospel Vol. 7, pp. 453-5)
AT LAZARUS' RESURRECTION

Jesus goes back to the groups that are astonished, almost frightened. He meets Gamaliel who is going towards the road. He looks at Gamaliel, who looks at Him. Jesus says to him without stopping: « Be ready, Rabbi. The sign will come soon. I never lie. »

(Poem Vol. 5, p.58; Gospel Vol. 8, p. 441)

MEETING OF THE SANHEDRON TO KILL JESUS

« There is nothing wrong if Joseph loves Him. I also admit that He is the greatest Rabbi in Israel. »

« Are you, Gamaliel, saying that? »

« Yes, I maintain that. And it is an honour to me to be... dethroned by Him because so far I had kept the tradition

of the great Rabbis, the last one of whom was Hillel. But after me, I do not know who was able to receive the wisdom of centuries. Now I shall go away happily because I know that it will not be lost. On the contrary, it will grow greater as it will be increased by His own wisdom, in which the Spirit of God is certainly present. »

« But what are you saying, Gamaliel? »

« I am speaking the truth. It is not by closing our eyes that we can ignore what we are. We are no longer wise because the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and we are sinners without the fear of God. [...] I refrain from shouting "Hosanna" and from crying "Anathema". I am waiting. »

« For the sign! Of course! You are waiting for the sign! But what sign can you expect from a poor madman, even if we want to forgive Him all the rest? »

Gamaliel stretches his hands and arms forward, and with closed eyes and lightly lowered head, looking most grave, he says in a slow distant voice: « I have anxiously asked the Lord to show me the truth, and He enlightened for me the words of Jesus the son of Sirach. [...] And He enlightened also the following words and I have acknowledged them: "Approach Me, you who desire Me, and take your fill of My fruits because My spirit is sweeter than honey and My inheritance is sweeter than the honeycomb. The memories of Me will last forever. They who eat Me will hunger for more, they who drink me will thirst for more; whoever listens to Me will never have to blush, whoever works for Me will never sin, whoever explains Me will have eternal life". And the light of God became brighter in my spirit while my eyes were reading these words: "All these things are contained in the book of Life, the will of the Most High, the doctrine of Truth... God promised David that from him would descend the most powerful King who is to sit on the throne of glory forever. ...He was the first to become perfectly aware of it". That is what God had enlightened for me! Alas! I say that the Wisdom among us is too great to be understood by us, neither can we contain a thought vaster than oceans nor an advice deeper than the great abyss. And we hear Him shout: "Like an immense watercourse I gushed out of Paradise and I said: 'I am going to water My garden', and then my watercourse became a river, and the river a sea. Like dawn I shed My doctrine on everybody, and I shall make it known to the remotest peoples. I shall descend into the lowest parts, I shall cast glances on those who are sleeping, I shall enlighten those who hope in the Lord. I shall pour out teaching like prophecy and I shall leave it to those who seek wisdom, I shall not stop announcing it until the holy century. I have not toiled for Myself alone, but for all who are seeking the truth". This is what God, the Most High God, made me read » and he lowers his arms and raises his head.

« So, according to you He is the Messiah?! Tell us! »

« He is not the Messiah. »

« He is not? Then what is He according to you? Not a demon. Not an angel. Not the Messiah... »

« He is He Who is. »

« You are raving! Is He God? Is that madman God according to you? »

« He is He Who is. God knows what He is. We see His works. God sees also His thoughts. But He is not the Messiah because Messiah to us means King. He is not and never will be king. But He is holy. And His works are

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those of a holy man. And we cannot threaten the Innocent without committing sin. I will not assent to sin. »

« But with your words, you have almost said that He is the Expected One! »

« I have said so. While the light of the Most High lasted I saw Him as such. Then... as the hand of the Lord no longer held me uplifted in His light, I became man again, the man of Israel, and the words were only those to which the man of Israel, I, you, those before us, and, God forbid it, those after us, attach the meaning of their, of our thoughts, not the meaning they have in the eternal Thought that dictated them to His servant. »

« We are talking, digressing, wasting time. And the crowds in the meantime are excited » says Hananiah in a croaking voice.

« You are right! It is necessary to take a decision and act, to save ourselves and to triumph. »

(Poem Vol. 5, pp. 70-2; Gospel Vol. 8, pp. 456-8)

AT LEBONAH

Jesus says: « Are you not Eleazar ben Parta? Then you will certainly see Gamaliel before I see him. Tell him, in My name, that I will give him also, after twenty one years, the reply for which he is waiting. Have you understood? Remember this carefully: after twenty one years I will give him also the reply that he awaits. Goodbye. »

(Poem Vol. 5, p. 247; Gospel Vol. 9, p. 170)

THURSDAY BEFORE PASSOVER

Also Gamaliel, after remaining pensive for some minutes, [...] passes straight in front of Jesus, without looking at Him any more.

Jesus, instead, looks at him compassionately... and He raises His voice again, very loudly - it sounds like the blare of a trumpet to overcome every noise and be heard by the great scribe who is going away disappointed. He seems to be speaking to everybody, but it is clear that He is speaking for him alone. He says in a very loud voice:

« He who believes in Me, does not really believe in Me, but in Him who sent Me, and he who sees Me, sees Him who sent Me. And He is indeed the God of Israel! Because there is no other God but He. [...] Do not remain in darkness! I have come as Light to the world, so that he who believes in Me may not remain in darkness. Do not create remorse for yourselves, as you might not be able to appease your minds when I have gone back whence I came, and this would be a severe punishment of God for your stubbornness. [...]»

Words of light that fall into the darkness that is already growing darker in hearts! Gamaliel, who had stopped once again, his head bowed, resumes walking... Others follow him shaking their heads or sneering...

(Poem Vol. 5, pp. 484-6; Gospel Vol. 9, pp. 467-9)

THE CRUCIFIXION

[Joseph and Nicodemus] are almost at the bottom when they meet an unkempt Gamaliel, with no headgear, no mantle, with his magnificent garment soiled with mould and torn by bramble. A Gamaliel who is running, climbing and panting, with his hands in his thin very grizzled hair of an elderly man.

« Dreadful things! I was in the Temple! The sign! The Temple door unhinged! The purple hyacinth veil is hanging torn! The Holy of Holies is open! There is anathema upon us! » The two men look at him go... they look at each other... they say together: « "These stones

will shudder at My last words!" He had promised him!... »[...]

Gamaliel, who by now exhausted, is climbing the last few metres. He is proceeding, striking his breast and when he arrives at the first of the two open spaces, he throws himself on the ground, face downwards, a long white form on the yellowish ground, and he says moaning: « The sign! The sign! Tell me that You forgive me! A whisper, even only a whisper, to tell me that You hear me and forgive me. »

I understand that he thinks that Jesus is still alive. And he changes his mind only when a soldier, pushing him with his lance, says: « Get up and be silent. It's of no use! You should have thought of that previously. He is dead. And I, a heathen, am telling you: this Man, whom you have crucified, was really the Son of God! »

« Dead? Are You dead? Oh!... » Gamaliel raises his terrorised face, he tries to see as far up as the top, in the twilight. He cannot see much, but he can see enough to realise that Jesus is dead. And he sees the compassionate group that is consoling Mary, and John standing on the left side of the cross and weeping, and Longinus standing straight on the right side, solemn in his respectful posture.

He kneels down, stretches his arms out and weeping says: « It was You! It was You! We can no longer be forgiven. We have asked Your Blood upon us. And It cries to Heaven, and Heaven curses us... Oh! But You were Mercy!... I say to You, I, the destroyed Rabbi of Judah: "Your Blood on us, for pity's sake". Sprinkle us with It! Because only Your Blood can impetrate forgiveness for us... » and he weeps. And then, in a lower voice, he confesses his torture: « I have the requested sign... But ages and ages of spiritual blindness are upon my interior sight, and against my present will, rises the voice of my proud thought of the past... Have mercy on me! Light of the world, let one of Your rays descend on the darkness that did not understand You! I am the old Judaeon faithful to what I thought was justice, and it was error. I am now a barren land, no longer with any of the ancient trees of the ancient Faith, without any seed or stalk of the new Faith. I am an arid desert. Work the miracle of making a flower, that has Your name, spring up in this poor heart of an old obstinate Israelite. Since You are the Liberator, come into my poor thought, which is a prisoner of formulas. Isaiah says so: "... He paid for sinners and took upon Himself the sins of many". Oh! also mine, Jesus Nazarene... »

He stands up. He looks at the cross which is becoming more and more clear in the light, and then he goes away, stooping, aged, destroyed.

(Poem Vol. 5, pp. 624-5; Gospel Vol. 10, pp. 142-4)

THE GRADUAL CONVERSION OF GAMALIEL

« Gamaliel!? » exclaims Mary much surprised.

Lazarus cannot help smiling sarcastically while he replies to Her: « Yes. The sign, the famous sign that he was waiting for, to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, has shaken him. No one can deny that the sign was such as to crush even the hardest heads and hearts and make them surrender. And Gamaliel was shaken, crushed and demolished by the most powerful sign, more than the houses that collapsed on Preparation Day, while the world seemed to perish with the Great Victim. Remorse has torn him, more than the veil of the Temple was torn, the

remorse for never having understood Jesus for what He really was. The closed sepulchre of his spirit of an old pig-headed Jew has opened, like the tombs that let the bodies of the just appear, and he is now anxiously seeking truth, light, forgiveness, life. The new life. The one that only through Jesus and in Jesus can be obtained. Oh! He will still have to work hard to clear his ancient ego completely of the rubble of his past way of thinking! But he will succeed. » *(Poem Vol. 5, p. 902; Gospel Vol. 10, p.488)*

THE MARTYRDOM OF STEPHEN

Among the most furious ones there is a young short ugly looking man, named Saul. The fierceness of his face is indescribable. In a corner of the hall there is Gamaliel. He has never taken part in the brawl, neither has he ever addressed Stephen or any mighty person. His disgust for the unfair wild scene is manifest. [...] But suddenly, and precisely when he sees Stephen being lifted by his hair for the third time, Gamaliel envelops himself in his very wide mantle and he goes towards an exit in the opposite direction to that towards which the deacon is being dragged. His action does not pass unnoticed to Saul who shouts: « Rabbi Gamaliel, are you evading this judgment? »

Gamaliel turns round all of one piece and, looking furious, disgusted as he is, dignified and frigid, he replies only: « Yes. » But his « yes » is worth more than a long speech. [...] Gamaliel does not look at him, neither does he reply to him. Saul then asks him: « But are you perhaps, you as well, a follower of that criminal named Jesus? »

Gamaliel now speaks and says: « I am not yet. But if He was what He said, and truly many things prove that He was, I pray God that I may become one. »

(Poem Vol.5, pp. 905-6; Gospel Vol. 10, pp. 492-3)

GAMALIEL BECOMES A CHRISTIAN

Some years have gone by because John seems to be in full manhood, more sturdily built and with a more mature appearance. [...] A shuffling of steps can be heard... Mary raises Her head and looks towards the door. John, in turn, looks towards the door. [...] A very old Gamaliel by now, ghastly, so thin is he in his white garments, ... A Gamaliel crushed, overwhelmed by events, by his remorse, by so many things, even more than by age. [...]

« If you will guide me... I am blind... » replies the old Rabbi. [...] John, dumbfounded, asks, « Blind?! Since when? »

« Oh!... Since long ago! My sight began to grow weaker immediately after I did not recognise the true Light that had come to enlighten men, until the earthquake tore the veil of the Temple and shook the mighty walls, as He had said. Really a double veil, that covered the Holy of the Holies of the Temple and the even truer Holy of Holies, the Word of the Father, His eternal Only-Begotten, concealed by the veil of a most pure human flesh, that only His Passion and His glorious Resurrection revealed to the most dull-minded people, and to me first of all, for what He really was: the Christ, the Messiah, the Immanuel. Since that moment darkness began to descend upon my eyes, becoming thicker and thicker. A just punishment for me. For some time I have been completely blind. » [...]

« You are tired and old, Rabbi. Do not tire yourself any more » and pitifully, with John, Mary leads him towards the table and makes him sit on a stool.

Gamaliel, before leaving Her hand free, kisses it with veneration, then he says to Her: « I am not asking of You, Mary, the miracle to see once again. No. I am not asking this material thing. What I ask of You, O Blessed amongst all women, is the sight of an eagle for my spirit, so that I may see all the Truth. I do not ask of You the light for my blind eyes, but the supernatural divine true light that is wisdom, truth, life, for my soul and my heart torn by and exhausted with the remorse that gives me no rest. [...] What I wish to see, with my mind, my heart, my spirit, is He, Jesus. To see Him in me, in my spirit, to see Him spiritually. To see Him in order to love Him with my whole self, and through this love, be able to make amends for my sins, and be forgiven by Him, to have the eternal Life, that I failed to deserve... » and he weeps. « I had the rare grace of becoming acquainted with Your Son as from His first public manifestation, when He came of age. I should have seen since then! I should have understood! I was blind and foolish... I did not see and I did not understand. Neither then, nor in other occasions, when I had the grace of approaching Him, by that time a Man and Master, and I heard His ever more just and powerful words. I was stubbornly awaiting the human sign, the shaken stones... And I did not see that everything in Him was a sure sign! And I did not see that He was the corner Stone predicted by the Prophets, the Stone that was already shaking the world, all the Hebrew and Gentile world; the Stone that shook the stones of hearts with His Word, with His prodigies! I did not see on Him the clear sign of His Father in everything He did or said! How can He forgive so much stubbornness? »

« [...] You already are in the Light, on the right Way, towards the true Life of the children of God. » says Mary.

« But in order to receive the Grace I must enter the Church, receive Baptism that cleanses us from sin and makes us once again the adoptive sons of God. [...] I can no longer esteem and love the Temple. But I do not want to be nothing. So I must rebuild the new man and the new faith on the ruins of my past ... [...] Then take me to [the Pontiff Peter] at once. I am old and I have delayed too long. I felt that I was too unworthy, and I was afraid that all the servants of Jesus judged me in the same manner. Now that Mary's words and yours have comforted me, I want to enter the Flock of the Master at once, before my old heart, crushed by so many things, stops. Lead me there, [...] First I, a rebel son, will go to the house of the Father, I, a lost sheep, to the true Fold of the eternal Shepherd. Then I will go back to my far away house, to die there in peace and in the grace of God. »

Mary embraces him saying: « May God give you peace. Peace and eternal glory because you have deserved them by showing your real thoughts to the mighty leaders of Israel, without fearing their reactions. »

Gamaliel searches for Her hands again. He takes them in his own and kisses them, he kneels down begging Her to lay those blessed hands on his old tired head.

Mary satisfies him. She does even more. She traces the sign of the cross on his bent head. Then, with John, She helps him to stand up, She takes him to the door and remains looking at him go away, led by John, towards the true Life: a man, humanly finished, but supernaturally re-created. *(Poem Vol.5 pp.916-20 ; Gospel Vol. 10, pp.505-10)*