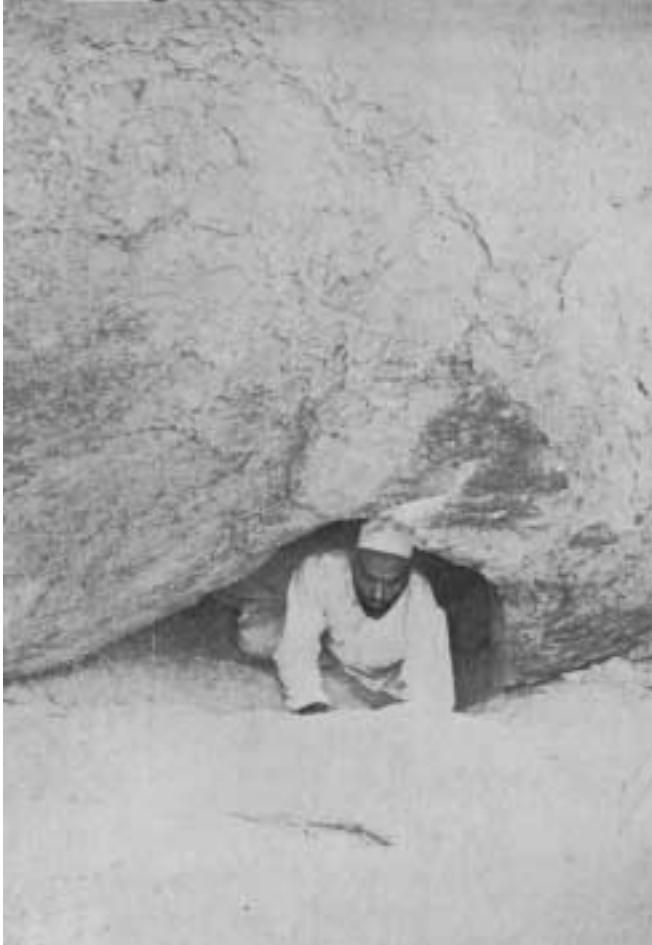


PART II
BIRTH



Ghar-i-Sour (Mount Thour)
(See page 253)

CHAPTER 3

NAME, DATE AND PLACE

Name

According to a Biblical prophecy,¹ alleged to have been fulfilled in Jesus,² he was to be called *Immanuel* (God is with us), but he was never so called; and, according to his own utterance, at a most crucial moment in his life, instead of God being with him, he had, indeed, been forsaken by Him.³ Isaiah also mentions the other name of *Immanuel* as *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*.⁴ This name also was never applied to Jesus. So far as Jesus was concerned, therefore, this prophecy remained unfulfilled and, as I will show later, did not and could not apply to him.

As foretold to both Joseph and Mary, in separate apparitions,⁵ the name should have been, and was in fact, *Joshua* (Aramaic: Jesu; Arabic: Isa) which in Greek is Jesus. Among the Jews of Palestine the name Joshua was exceedingly common. It was as if one were to be called *Karl* among Germans, *Louis* among Frenchmen, *Nicholas* among Russians and *Smith* or *George* among Englishmen. Jesus is also referred to in the Gospels as *Christ*, the Anointed; *Messiah*, the Wanderer; and *Nazarene*, the Warner. *Joshua* or *Jesu*, *Isa* or *Jesus* was his name, *Christ* his designation, *Messiah* his descriptive rank and *Nazarene* his significant title as a Prophet of God.

It has always been taken for granted that Jesus was called the *Nazarene* because he belonged to Nazareth. The declaration of the evangelists⁶ on this point is so definite that even present-day commentators and historians have accepted it almost universally. But, like so many other Christian beliefs, it has no foundation at all.

The word *Nazarene* appears in the Gospels in three different forms: *Nazarenos*, *Nazoraios* and *Nazorenos*; which the evangelists have taken to be interchangeable. But none of these forms is capable of being derived from *Nazareth*: the *S* or *Ts* (Aramaic *tsade*, which is represented by the Greek letter *sigma*) in *Nazareth*, makes it impossible to connect these three forms with *Nazareth*. Moreover, the Greek letter *zeta* in these three words points to the contrary.

The theory that the word *Nazarene* was merely to indicate that Jesus belonged to a sect of that name is equally devoid of force; for no one has so far been able to prove that this sect existed at the time of Jesus. The reference to the word *Nazarite* or *Netser*,⁷ a branch, signifying the Davidic descent, an offshoot of the stem of Jesse, likewise has no application. Here, again, in both cases the presence of the letter *ts* (*tsade* of Aramaic) and the absence of *zeta* will stand in the way. We will have, therefore, to look for another solution. In the word *Nazir* in Arabic (same in Hebrew, and

1. Isa., 7 : 14.

2. Matt., 1 : 23.

3. Matt., 27 : 46.

4. Isa., 8 : 3.

5. Matt., 1 : 20-25; Luke, 1 : 28-31.

6. Matt., 2 : 23, etc.

7. Isa., 11 : 1; Jer., 23 : 5.

Aramaic was only a dialect) we find the *zeta* of Greek, the *zain* of Hebrew or the *zal* of the Arabic. *Nazir* means *holy, chosen, guard* or *warner*. Thus *Nazir* would be a fitting *title* for Jesus who was *holy* in character, a *chosen* man, a Prophet of God, a *guard* over the Lost Tribes of Israel and a *Warner* from God to them. The Greek equivalent of *Nazir* is *Hagios: the Holy one of God*.

Now, let us see if this word has been applied in this sense in the Gospels to Jesus. In Mark we have an account of one of the first miracles of Jesus, the healing of a demoniac who, on seeing Jesus, exclaimed:

What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the *Holy one of God*.¹

In John we find Peter addressing Jesus thus:

And we have believed and know that thou art the *Holy one of God*.²

In Luke the angel which appeared to Mary informed her:

That the thing which shall be born of thee shall be called *holy*.³

I will quote but one more passage from the Acts:

Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus the Nazarene a *man chosen of God* among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourself also know.⁴

I have given the translation of the *Codex Syriac Sinaiticus*.

Similar passages⁵ can be cited to show that the early Christians knew and applied the word *Holy One* to express the title of Jesus, and, at the same time, to impress upon the minds of others the idea of his character as the Messiah.

I have here only very briefly set out the grounds for holding that *Nazir* was the special descriptive title of Jesus. The compilers of the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* say:

Therefore, *Nazarene* must have taken the place of some *title* of the Messiah. The right reading must be *Nazir*; the *Holy One*, which is the title of the Messiah.⁶

It is interesting to note that Professor L. Salvatorelli also came to the same conclusion, though on somewhat different grounds. In his wonderful work: *Il Significato di Nazareno*, he opined that the Promised Messiah must also bear this descriptive title of *Nazir*.

1. Mark, 1 : 24; cf. Luke, 4 : 34.

2. John, 6 : 69; also see next note.

3. Luke, 1 : 35 : Both in Luke, 1 : 35, and John, 6 : 69 the words used in the Authorised Version are : "the Son of God" and "Christ, the Son of the living God." But both these are subsequent forg-

eries. The texts given by me are according to the ancient MSS. See marginal notes on pages 1125 and 1177 of the *Revised Version*.

4. Acts, 2 : 22.

5. Acts, 2 : 27; Rev., 3 : 7.

6. *Enc. Biblica*, Col. 3360.

Date of Birth

As might be expected, we find also a good deal of confusion regarding the date and place of birth of Jesus. The dates for the chronology of his life group themselves round three points, the nativity, the baptism and the crucifixion. If any one of them could be settled conclusively, the rest could be deduced. But, unfortunately, there is for none of them any demonstrative proof and no one can fix, with any certainty, the dates of any of these events.

Both Matthew and Luke place the birth during the reign of Herod, the King of the Jews. He reigned from 707 to 740 of the era of Vero, *i.e.*, from 37 B.C.E. to 4 B.C.E. Herod, according to Matthew, sometime, not more than two years, after the birth of Jesus, ordered the Massacre of the Infants, and, consequently Joseph fled to, and remained in Egypt for the rest of the King's life-time.¹ Thus, according to Matthew, Herod's death is the *terminus ad quem* for the birth of Jesus. The birth of Jesus must have, therefore, taken place two or, if the period of Joseph's stay in Egypt and his journey is taken into consideration, three or four years before 4 B.C.E., the year of Herod's death; and it must, therefore, be placed between 8 to 6 B.C.E.

The appearance of the Star of the Magi causes further confusion. Voigt has proved that this star was really Halley's comet, which appeared in 12 C.E.² The compilers of the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* dismiss this incident by remarking:

The star shines only in the legend and derives its origin from Numbers 24:17 and the apocryphal imagery (Rev. 12:1).³

Luke dates the birth of Jesus by a general census ordered by Augustus and carried out in Syria by the legate Quirinius,⁴ but he also places, in the reign of Herod, an event which preceded it by six months, the birth of John the Baptist.⁵ The only census carried out by Quirinius, as Governor of Syria, was in the reign of Augustus and could only have taken place after the deposition of Archelous in 6 C.E. This date (6-7 C.E.) is in point of fact also mentioned by Josephus.⁶ In any case, this census would not have affected the Galileans, who were subjects of Antipas. Luke, therefore, is not only in contradiction with Matthew but also with himself.

Dionysius Exiguus, the sixth century Scythian monk, was the author of the Christian Era, which is sometimes called, after his name, the *Dionysian Era*. He has, however, never been relied upon as a sound mathematician, for he miscalculated the birth of Jesus and thus started the year of the Lord in 754 A.U.G. *i.e.*, 1 C.E.

The question is further complicated when we test the date of birth with the date of baptism. Luke says:

1. Matt., 2 : 1, 13, 16, 19, 22.

2. Voigt, *Die Gesch Jesu und die Astrologie*, 611.

3. *Enc. Biblica*, Col. 808.

4. Luke, 2 : 1-2. The Authorised Version gives the name of *Cyrenius*.

5. Luke, 1 : 5, 24, 26, 57, 60.

6. Josephus, *Antiq.*, 13, 13 : 2, 5.

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea and Herod being tetrach of Galilee, . . . Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.¹

Tiberius ruled from 14 to 37 C.E. and, therefore, the event narrated by Luke must have taken place in 29 C.E. According to Matthew and Luke, the ministry of Jesus lasted for one year, *i.e.*, up to 30 C.E. This gives the clue why the Dionysian Era fixed 1 C.E. as the year of birth of Jesus, for its author merely deducted thirty years, the age of Jesus given by Luke,² when his ministry started. But Luke mentions another event: the murder of John the Baptist. This happened during the ministry of Jesus.³ The execution of John is also related by Josephus. He connected it with the defeat of Antipas by Aretas, who waged war because Antipas had divorced Aretas' daughter in order that he might marry Herodias. This took place about 36 C.E.⁴ If we make allowance for the preparation of war, we can safely say that John was murdered in about 34 C.E. If this be correct the ministry of Jesus must have started later than 30 C.E. Again, Luke mentions that these events took place when Annas and Caiaphas were high priests. Annas was appointed high priest in 7 C.E. by Quirinius and deposed in 15 C.E. by Valerius Gratus.⁵ Caiaphas on the other hand was appointed by Gratus in 18 C.E. and was removed by Vitellius, the successor of Pilate, in 37 C.E.⁶

Luke is not, therefore, a safe guide to follow, and any attempt to reconcile his statements with chronology is futile and, in fact, would be to do this evangelist too much honour. "He wished," says Schmidt, "to place Mary at Bethlehem and, therefore, time and circumstances had to suit his pleasure."⁷

It is equally futile to work out this date from the date of crucifixion. The Synoptics put the crucifixion on Friday, the 15th of Nisan.⁸ John places it on the 14th of Nisan.⁹ We have, therefore, to find the year in which 14th Nisan fell on a Friday, because the Jewish Passovers always fell on the 14th of the first Jewish month and the Feast of the unleavened bread on the 15th of that month.¹⁰ After making allowance for the intercalary month, we come to the Sabbatical year of 35-36 C.E., which may account for the three or four years of the ministry of Jesus as indicated by John in his reference to the three Passovers attended by Jesus.¹¹ The reference of Jesus to the fig tree for three years also supports John's version.¹²

The Synoptic Gospels speak of one visit of Jesus to Jerusalem, and confine the ministry to one year. If John's version be rejected, it becomes inexplicable how Jesus, in the short span of the feast days in one year, could have brought himself into such

1. Luke, 3 : 1-2.

2. Luke, 3 : 23.

3. Luke, 9 : 9-11.

4. Josephus, *Antiq.*, 13, 5 : 1.

5. *Ibid.*, 18, 2 : 1-2.

6. *Ibid.*, 18, 2 : 2-3.

7. Schmidt, *Bibli fur Kritik und Exegese*, 3 : 1, S. 124.

8. Matt., 27 : 62; Mark, 15 : 42; Luke, 23 : 54.

9. John, 19 : 31.

10. Lev., 23 : 5-6.

11. John, 2, 13-25; 7 : 8-14; 11 : 55.

12. Luke, 13 : 7.

decided hostility to the ruling party in Jerusalem that they contrived his arrest and death. John certainly is more convincing when he says that this hostility was gradually aggravated during his frequent visits. Besides, the Synoptics record an expression of Jesus which tells against their view. The words: "Jerusalem! Jerusalem! . . . *how often* have I gathered thy children together"¹ would be meaningless if he had seen Jerusalem once only during his ministry. Further, Jesus had no right to curse Jerusalem and its inhabitants if he had preached his Gospel to them for but a few days. All these presuppose many previous visits.

The date of the crucifixion would therefore fall in about 35 C.E.

We can check our data by the fact that Pontius Pilate held office until 36 C.E. He was recalled, it is said, because of the crucifixion of Jesus. It would be natural that it should have occurred soon after the crucifixion. One or two years is not a long time to elapse, especially when it is said that Pilate had, in the first instance, to send his explanation to Caesar. Pilate's successor Vitellius also removed Caiaphas, the high priest, in 37 C.E., because of the same event. Thus if the Matthean tradition regarding the date of the birth of Jesus is correct (as already indicated, *i.e.*, 8 to 6 B.C.E.) Jesus must have been 41 to 43 years old at the time of his crucifixion and must have started his prophetic career at about or over the age of forty. Irenaeus, who lived in the second century and was a Bishop of Lyons, noted that the Presbyters in Asia Minor had ascribed to Jesus an age of forty to fifty years. He also recorded a tradition, testified to by the elders and said to have been directly derived from "the beloved disciple of the Lord," to the effect that Jesus was not crucified at thirty years of age, but that he passed through every age, and lived on to be an oldish man.² John records an incident which confirms this conclusion:

Then said the Jews unto him. Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham.³

Taking for granted that the Jews were talking in round figures, Jesus must have been over forty years of age. Had he died in 29 C.E., he would have been between 30 and forty years of age, and the Jews would have then said *forty* and not *fifty* years. The birth of Jesus, therefore, took place in about 8 B.C.E., he started his ministry in about 32 C.E. and was put on the Cross in about 35 C.E.

The question regarding the date and month of the birth of Jesus is impossible to answer.⁴

1. Matt., 23 : 37; Luke, 13 : 34.

2. Haer., 2 : 2 : 5, 1.

3. John, 8 : 57.

4. There is every justification for believing that the evangelists or subsequent redactors freely copied or reproduced events from the Mythos and presented them as *historical* in the Canonical Gospels. For the more hidden and uncertain the meaning or significance of the Gospel history, the more satisfactorily and easily is it explained by the Mythos: the more mystical the Christian dogma, the more clearly can it be proved to be mythical. It may, by way of illustration, be pointed out that the birth of *Christ* is really astronomical : and that his birthday can be determined by the full moon of Easter. This event, as illustrated by the Epact or the Golden Number of the Prayer Book, can only occur once in every nineteen years. Thus

Before I close this discussion, I must point out why the thirtieth year was fixed by Luke as the year of the commencement of Jesus' ministry. Dean Milman gives the excuse:

The law prescribed the period of thirty years for assuming of the most important functions, and it was, therefore, not till he had arrived at this age that Jesus again emerged from his obscurity.¹

In the Old Testament we find the age given between 30 to 50 years;² and of course, Luke could not make Jesus wait much longer, and he fixed the minimum years for the commencement of the ministry of Jesus.

Place of Birth

In the Gospels we have two contradictory versions regarding the birth-place of Jesus. Matthew and Luke, on different data, give Bethlehem-Judah as the place of his birth. Since Jesus was the Messiah, and tradition made it incumbent on the Messiah,

Jesus, or rather *Christ*, can in accordance with the Metonic Cycle, have a birthday, or resurrection, only once in nineteen years.

Casini, the renowned French Astronomer, has demonstrated that the date assigned to Jesus is an Astronomical epoch in which the middle conjunction of the moon with the sun happened on March 24, at half-past one o'clock in the morning, at the meridian of Jerusalem, the very day of the middle Equinox. The following day (the 25th) was the day of Incarnation according to Augustine, but the date of birth according to Clement. Thus two birthdays are assigned to Jesus by the Christian fathers: one at the Winter Solstice, and the other at the Vernal Equinox. These, which cannot both be historical, can only be explained by the two birthdays ascribed to the double Horus in Egypt. Plutarch has recorded that Isis was delivered of Horus, the child, about the time of the Winter Solstice, and that the festival of the second or adult Horus followed the Vernal Equinox.

Likewise is the difference in the date of the crucifixion. John asserts that it was on the 14th of the Nisan, while the Synoptics allege it to have occurred on the 15th Nisan. This difference can also be explained on the same basis. In lunar calculation it would be the 14th in a month of twenty-eight days, but in a solar month of thirty days, it must fall on the 15th of the month. If we unite the two on astronomical, and consequently on mythical, bases the difference disappears and is easy to understand.

Jesus' birth in the manger and the reference to the Caves remind one of the cave of Jupiter and other mythical gods. Mithras is said to have been born in a cave. But the *Cave of Mithras* was the birth-place of the Sun in the Winter Solstice, when this occurred on December 25, in the sign of the Ram. The Akkadian name the month, which roughly answers to December, as *Abbauddu* that is the CAVE OF LIGHT. Justin Martyr says: "Christ was born in the stable, and afterwards took refuge in the cave," and he goes on to vouch for the fact that Christ was born on the same day that the Sun was reborn in *Stabulum Augiae*, the stable of Augias. And we find that the stable and the cave both figure in the same Celestial sign of the Lion. Again, the birthday of Horus was figured in *Apta*: but *Apta* is also the name of the *Crib* and the *Manger*. The same incident is repeated with Christ. This is also pointed out by the Star in the East: and we are told that *Orion*, the Star of the Three Kings, also called the Star of Horus, rose in the East and guided people to the newly born Sun-god. This birth then passed into the sign of the Fishes. The Talmud also said that the coming Messiah will be called *Dag*, the Fish, and connected his coming with the sign of the Fishes. The evangelists or redactors made Jesus perform the miracle of the fishes to meet this demand. This discussion, though interesting in itself, is beyond the scope of this book, and I must leave it here. Those who wish to study the subject in greater detail would do well to read *The Sources of Christianity* by the late Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din.

1. Milman, *Life of Christ*, 135.

2. Num., 4 : 3, 47.

a son of David, to have been born at Bethlehem-Judah,¹ Matthew contented himself with an assertion that Joseph, the father of Jesus, belonged to Bethlehem-Judah. Now, if Joseph really belonged to Bethlehem-Judah, why should he have tried to seek shelter in an inn in that very town in preference to his own house? The truth is that Matthew was out to fulfil as many old prophecies in the person of Jesus as he could. The birth had to be in a cave,² Jesus had to be worshipped by the *angels* and the *asses*;³ the visit of the shepherds from the field,⁴ the vision for flight to Egypt,⁵ in consequence of the Murder of the Infants⁶ — all these and many other prophecies had to be fulfilled; and Matthew in his narrative had them fulfilled in Jesus. I will refrain from multiplying instances, as I have already touched upon the subject, and mentioned the birth in the manger. But whether it was for these or other considerations, Matthew found no difficulty in asserting that Joseph belonged to Bethlehem-Judah.

Luke attributed the journey of the family to Bethlehem-Judah because of the census of Quirinius, which, as I have already mentioned, did not take place in the time of Herod. Both Matthew and Luke agree that the nativity took place during the reign of Herod, and this must be accepted. The reasons of Luke, therefore, for the journey of Joseph to, and the consequential birth at, Bethlehem-Judah also disappear.

Christian apologists object that, if Joseph did not belong to Bethlehem-Judah, why did not Matthew, like Luke, create an excuse for the presence of the family at the crucial time in that town? The answer is a very simple one. Matthew knew what he wanted to establish and was better informed. To explain the real position, I must mention first that in Galilee there was a very small village called Bethlehem. It is mentioned in Talmudic literature as Bethlehem *en* Nosiriyah, which according to the Old Testament fell to the lot of Zebulun.⁷ This village was situated in the valley of Esdraelon, about seven miles north-west of Nazareth. While most evangelists correctly stated that Jesus was born at Nazareth, Matthew, for reasons already mentioned, took advantage of the fact that Joseph belonged to this Bethlehem, and dishonestly stated in his narrative that Jesus was born at Bethlehem, knowing that the mere mention of this name would be construed as if Jesus was born in Bethlehem-Judah. While discussing the question the compilers of the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* say:

Bethlehem, without any explanatory addition, was supposed to be the Southern Bethlehem, and the well-known narratives, so poetic, so full of spiritual suggestion (and may I add: so full of lies) in Matthew (Chapter II) and in Luke (II : 1-20), which are not supported by any other Gospels, have arisen in consequence.⁸

I will now show from the evangelic and other records that Jesus was born in a small town in Galilee called Nazareth. In the *Evangelium de Nativitate de Maria* we

1. Micah, 5 : 1, 2; *cf.* Matt., 2 : 1.

2. Isa., 28 : 16.

3. Isa., 1 : 3.

4. Exod., 13 : 8.

5. Hos., 11 : 1.

6. Jer., 31 : 15; Exod., 13 : 15.

7. Jos., 19 : 10-16.

8. *Ency. Biblica*, Col. 3362. (*Words in brackets are mine.*)

are told that Joachim and Hanna (or Anna), the parents of Mary, lived in a small town called *Maiden en Nasara*,¹ or, as it has come down in Western history, Nazareth.²

This little town was cut off from the rest of the world, being far removed from the great “highways of the Seas” and the caravan routes. It was a peaceful Galilean town, half way up the hills, cultivating its own fields and orchards, busying itself in all manners of handicraft. It was, as it were, sunk into its own self-seeing visions, dreaming its dreams. This was a fitting place for the birth-place of a moralist and reformer, for his visions and dreams. It was to this town, her parents’ old residence, where her sister lived, that Mary returned, from the village Bethlehem, to give birth to her first-born.

Nowhere in the New Testament, apart from Matthew and Luke, whose assertions have already been shown to be false, is the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem-Judah mentioned; nowhere does Jesus subsequently appear within his alleged birth-place; nowhere does he pay any visit, except on his last journey to Jerusalem; nowhere does he appeal to this fact as concomitant proof of his Messiahship although he had direct inducement to do so: for many were repelled from him by his Galilean origin and defended their prejudices by referring to the necessity that the Messiah should come out of Bethlehem-Judah, the city of David.³ Insults were flung to his face; his mission was being denied: the disputants were challenging:

Can there any good come out of Nazareth?⁴

And again,

Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.⁵

But he never asserted his being a Bethlehemite, and only complained:

A prophet is not without honour save in his own country and his own house.⁶

John records an incident which throws a flood of light on the subject. When certain people heard Jesus preach, they said:

Of a truth this is the prophet. This is the Christ, but some said, shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not scriptures said that Christ cometh out of the seed of David and out of *Bethlehem* the village where David was. So there arose a division among the multitude regarding him.⁷

I have quoted from the Syriac manuscript to show that it was acknowledged by all that Jesus had come out of Bethlehem in Galilee. It may be explained that amongst

1. It was from this name that the epithet *Nasrani* originated; which has been and is still today applied to Christians by Jews and Arabs alike. Nazareth is called by the Arabs to this day *Nasara*.

2. The present-day Nazareth does not stand on the site of this ancient town. It was destroyed and rebuilt at a place below the old town.

3. John, 7 : 42. See also Mica., 5 : 1-2; Jer., 23 : 5; Ps., 132 : 11.

4. John, 1 : 46.

5. John, 7 : 52.

6. Matt., 13 : 57; Mark, 6 : 4.

7. John, 7 : 40-43. See margin of Revised Version, p. 1179. The Authorised Version uses the phrase “out of the town of Bethlehem.”

Jews the residence town of a father was always attributed to be also that of the son. The denial of his mission was pointedly based on this fact, so much so that it caused a division among those present at the time. John must have accepted the fact that Jesus was born in Galilee and not at Bethlehem-Judah, for he also, like Jesus, did not try to contradict those who asserted otherwise.

Mark directly gives us to understand that Jesus was born in Galilee. It is true that he does not name the town, but since Jesus was wandering at the time when he is said to have preached in “his own country,”¹ it is clear that Mark styled Galilee as “his own country.” Luke from the very beginning gives Nazareth as the abode of Mary.² It was to this place, when circumstance permitted, that the parents of Jesus returned as *their own city*.³ Thus, according to Luke, Nazareth is evidently the native place of Jesus.

Matthew says Jesus was born at Bethlehem-Judah; no doubt, as already stated, to fulfil a prophecy. But he is in conflict with himself for he speaks of the prophetic advent of Jesus in Galilee,⁴ basing his claim on the well-known passage in Isaiah.⁵ Besides, if Joseph belonged to Bethlehem-Judah, as Matthew would have us believe, he has no right to call Nazareth, as he does, the home of Joseph⁶ like his predecessor was able to do.⁷

Now and again, Jesus is spoken of in the Gospels as Jesus of *Galilee*,⁸ Jesus of Nazareth,⁹ and sometimes as Jesus, Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee,¹⁰ but never as Jesus of Bethlehem-Judah or as the Bethlehemite. There are various passages which speak of Galilee as Jesus’ “own country.”¹¹

It is from Nazareth that he set out to meet John the Baptist.¹² Nazareth is the place from which he goes out to preach¹³ and returns to it time and again.¹⁴ In short, as Luke says, Nazareth was *his own city*, the city in which he was born and brought up.¹⁵

Before concluding this chapter, I will quote a passage from the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* wherein its compilers are compelled to admit that:

The discrepancies of the evangelists compel us to make some hypothesis: Jesus was born in Nazareth and not in Bethlehem-Judah, and the transmitters made a mistake — some said Bethlehem and some said Nazareth.¹⁶

It is, therefore, evident that the evangelical statement that Jesus was born in Bethlehem-Judah is destitute of all valid evidence; nay it is contravened by positive facts as stated in the Gospels themselves.

1. Mark, 6 : 1. The proper translation is “*his native place*.”

2. Luke, 1 : 26.

3. Luke, 2 : 39.

4. Matt., 2 : 23; 4 : 14-15.

5. Isa., 7 : 14; cf. Ju., 13 : 5. It would be an interesting pastime to trace all the strained coincidences in the life of Jesus, with the prophecies of the Old Testament: but which by themselves, because of this peculiarity, do not inspire the least confidence in the incidents which they are supposed to corroborate.

6. Matt., 2 : 23

7. Mark, 1 : 24

8. Matt., 26 : 69.

9. Matt., 26 : 71; Luke, 4 : 34.

10. Matt., 21 : 11.

11. Matt., 13 : 54, 57; Mark, 6 : 1, 4; Luke, 2 : 39.

12. Matt., 4 : 13; Luke, 2 : 51.

13. Matt., 3 : 13; Mark, 1 : 9.

14. Matt., 9 : 1; Luke, 2 : 51.

15. Luke, 4 : 16.

16. *Ency. Biblica*, Col. 3361.

CHAPTER 4

DAVIDIC DESCENT

The first and the third Gospels, which give details of the virgin birth, are also designed to exhibit the descent of Jesus from David. They contain two genealogies of Jesus. The belief that the blessed son of Jehovah, the Messiah, had to be from the *seed* of David was a religious postulate based on some Biblical prophecies.¹

Joseph, the humble father of Jesus, was made to be in a direct line to the King chosen of old by Jehovah. There was no question of finding out if such a relationship did exist, or could be proved to exist, or even made to appear plausible. The hagiographers did not trouble themselves with such details or scruples. They had to establish that the prophets of old were not false and did not take the trouble of verifying whether they did really say what was being attributed to them. The prophecies found in the “Old Book” had to be fulfilled. Jesus was the Messiah and evidence of his descent from David was created. The sceptics demanded proof, and as there was none in existence, they put forward the two genealogies, taking names of generations, as far as they could, from the “Old Book” and where it would not help them, they resorted to their own resourceful imagination.

These two genealogies, considered each in itself or both together, afford so important a key to the character of the evangelic records that a close examination of them is rendered imperative. A moment’s scrutiny of the genealogy of Matthew will reveal its artificiality, in fact, it is naively exhibited in the last verse:

So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.²

In other words, for reasons unknown, the author has constructed a framework which has no historical basis and thus made it as he thought fit. If the number of names given is computed, it is found that the last division, from Jechonias to Jesus, comprises only thirteen generations. It has been suggested that one of the names in the third division had been dropped by an error of a transcriber;³ but this cannot be a sound explanation because the deficiency was mentioned at an early stage by Porphyry.⁴

If we compare this genealogy with the corresponding passages in the Old Testament, we discover many discrepancies; many names there recorded are omitted by Matthew. The series of generations from Abraham to Judah, Pharez and Esrom (Hezron) are sufficiently well known from the Book of Genesis; and from Pharez to David are to be found at the end of the Book of Ruth,⁵ and from David to Zorobabel in the third Chapter of the same Book.

1. Ps., 132 : 11; Isa., 11 : 1; Jer., 23 : 5.

2. Matt., 1 : 17.

3. Paulus, *Comm : Matt.*, 292.

4. *Hieyon in Daniel*, 145.

5. Ruth, 4 : 18-22.

Now Matthew's first division of fourteen is identical with the names of *men* given in the Old Testament. But many discrepancies are found in the second division. Firstly, according to Matthew, "Joram begat Ozias,"¹ whereas we know that Uzziah was not the son, but the grandson of Joram, and that three kings—Ahaziah, Joash and Amaziah occur between them—and then comes Uzziah.² Secondly, Matthew says: "Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren,"³ but according to the Old Testament the son and successor of Josiah was Jehoiakim,⁴ after whom comes his son and successor Jeconiah, and no mention is made of his brethren. Jehoiakim, however, had brethren. This is not a case of accidental forgetfulness or casual inaccuracy; Matthew has simply cut out anything which interfered with his plan. Thirdly, Zorobabel is described as a son of Salathiel,⁵ but according to the Old Testament he descended from Jeconiah, not through Salathiel, but through his brother Pedaiah.⁶

It is, however, the omission of the three names which—for it falls in so happily with the threefold fourteen generations—forces us to believe, with Jerome, that it was made with a definite purpose.⁷ Olshausen is unconvincing when he conjectures that the number fourteen was specially chosen as being the numerical value of the name of David. Fritsche attributes it to a desire to repeat the number fourteen which had accidentally presented itself, since it was a notion of the Jews that signal divine visitations, whether of prosperity or adversity, recurred at regular periodical intervals. De Wette and Schneckenburger agree with this conclusion of Fritsche and the latter points out that the most ancient genealogies in Genesis exhibit the same uniformity. The conclusion is irresistible that it is not a case of accidental forgetfulness or casual inaccuracy.

The author of the First Gospel has deliberately cut out anything that interfered with the symbolic structure of fourteen generations into the second and third divisions, irrespective of the fact that he was introducing falsehood into a *Gospel*.

The author of Luke is equally indifferent to facts of history. His genealogy comprises seventy-seven names, with God at one end and Jesus at the other. This genealogy cannot, unfortunately, be tested so minutely; for, from David to Nathan, the line traced by Luke has no corresponding table in the Old Testament; and we do not know from where he got these names. With regard to only two of them—Salathiel and Zorobabel—there is a contradiction. Luke styles Salathiel as the son of Neri⁸ while he is actually the son of Jeconiah.⁹ Luke mentions Rhesa as the son of Zorobabel¹⁰ but that name does not appear in the Old Testament amongst the children of Zorobabel.¹¹ These two names could not be omitted by either Matthew or Luke because they were indissolubly connected with the Return. Again, Luke inserts in the series before Abraham one Cainan¹² who is not to be found in the Hebrew text of Genesis¹³ though

1. Matt., 1 : 8.

2. I Chron., 3: 11-12. Here as in 2 Kings, 14 : 21
Uzziah is called Azariah.

3. Matt., 1 : 11.

4. I Chron., 3 : 15.

5. Matt., 1 : 12.

6. I Chron., 3 : 19.

7. *Bible Common.*, 46. n.

8. Luke, 3 : 27.

9. I Chron., 3 : 17.

10. Luke, 3 : 27.

11. I Chron., 3 : 19.

12. Luke, 3 : 36.

13. Gen., 10 : 6 (Revised Version).

in another place¹ he is shown as the son of Ham, that is, the third series from Adam, and appears to have been transplanted to this place by Luke from the Greek Bible.

On comparing the two genealogies together some remarkable discrepancies appear on the face of them; some of which are due to the fact that Luke carries the line back to Adam and even beyond. This seems to have been done to make it more consonant with the doctrine of Paul. If we consider the generations between David and Jesus only, the number of generations according to Luke is forty-one and according to Matthew twenty-six. From Jesus to Abraham, Luke enumerates fifty-six generations; Matthew gives only forty.

Again, in the two Gospels totally different individuals are made ancestors of Jesus. Further, except for the fact that both trace the descent of Jesus from David through Joseph, described as the *father* of Jesus, the entire names given by the two between David and Joseph are different—the only exceptions are Salathiel and Zorobabel, which as already pointed out, could not be omitted. In Matthew the father of Joseph is Jacob, in Luke—Heli. In Matthew the son of David is Solomon; in Luke Nathan, and so on.

The most strenuous efforts have been made to reconcile the two genealogies. It would serve no useful purpose to discuss or examine in detail the various solutions so far put forward.

Julius Africanus suggested a Levirate marriage between the parents of Joseph; Augustine, the *adopted father* theory; but later on he gave up his own theory for that of Africanus.² Schneckenburger in rejecting both these theories rightly pointed out that the wording used in the genealogies excluded all possibility of either of the two suggestions. The Levirate marriage, he contended, could only be possible if both Heli and Jacob had been real brothers. They must, therefore, have the same lineage, but this is not borne out by the genealogies. Eusebius had put forward a really clever solution. He asserted that Jacob and Heli were half-brothers.³ If this were so, the paternal grandmother of Joseph must have married twice: once with the Matthan of Matthew, who had descended from David through Solomon; and her second husband must have been the Mattatha of Luke—a descendant of David through Nathan. If this be so, the untoward agreement occurring midway, regarding Salathiel and Zorobabel, cannot be accounted for without introducing another Levirate marriage at these two junctures. This has only to be mentioned to be rejected and thus this theory also falls to the ground. It was not until the 15th century of the Christian era that it was thought that the knot could be loosened in a much easier way by supposing that in one of the Gospels the genealogy of Mary is given.⁴ This theory was based on the idea that in Jesus the priestly and the kingly dignity ought to unite, and advantage was taken of the relationship of Mary with Elisabeth who was of the daughters of Aaron⁵ and thus an effort was made to blend, in the family of Joseph, the races of Judah and Levi. It was, therefore,

1. Gen., 9 : 22.

2. *Retract*, 2 : 17.

3. Eusebius, *Ecc. Hist.*, 1 : 7, 16.

4. Olshausen, *Bible Comm.*, S. 48. Epiphanius, Grotius, S. 97.

5. Luke, 1 : 5.

put forward that Jesus derived his royal lineage from Joseph and priestly race through Mary.¹ But it was soon realized that an insurmountable obstacle—the Jews did not take account of the female line in their genealogies²—prevented any fruitful discussion, particularly when the thirty-four preceding generations, which are well known to us from the Old Testament, demonstrably indicate throughout the precise relationship of a *father*. A further difficulty, as already mentioned, is encountered in the occurrence of the two names of Salathiel and Zorobabel. Moreover, in no other part of the New Testament can any trace be found of the descent of Mary through David. On the contrary, passages directly opposed to this theory can be found in Luke.³ It is, therefore, impossible to apply either of the genealogies to Mary.

These considerations of the insurmountable difficulties which defy every attempt to bring these genealogies into harmony with one another force one to the conclusion that they are irreconcilable, and consequently that both cannot be true. For reasons already given Matthew's version must be rejected as false. Luke, however, must be scrutinized more carefully inasmuch as it was written with a view to glorify Jesus and trace his descent from God Himself. It is incredible that the genealogy of an insignificant and obscure family like that of Joseph through Nathan could have been preserved, during all the confusion of the exile, for so long a series of generations. Add to this the frequent recurrence of the same names and the conclusions of Hoffmann become irresistible that the genealogy of Luke is equally fictitious.

In fact, the two genealogies remain self-contradictory and irreconcilable, resembling each other only in their common indifference to historical truth and the object of proving that Joseph, the *father* of Jesus, had, as was expected by Israel, descended from David.

It is significant that we find in the texts no indication that the Messiahship of Jesus was ever deduced from his Davidic descent. The process was just the reverse; the disciples first believed that Jesus was the Messiah and then made him a descendant of David by forging these genealogies. Thus an obscure Galilean, for such was Jesus, whose lineage was utterly unknown and of whom consequently no one could prove that he had or had not descended from David, had acquired the reputation of being the Messiah. It was natural, therefore, that with slightly different material the two evangelists should have succeeded in realizing the same purpose, namely, to vindicate the Messianic status of Jesus by proving that he, through his *father* Joseph, was a member of the house of David. The belief in this illustrious descent was very old. Even Paul knew and accepted that Jesus was born "of the seed of David, according to the flesh."⁴ He had to be "the fruit of the loins of David."⁵

But the Davidic descent of Jesus can be impugned on other grounds. Jesus never boasted of it; nor did his disciples regard him as such. Neither the appeal of the blind man of Jericho: "Son of David, Jesus, have mercy on me,"⁶ nor the acclamation on his

1. Comp. Thilo Cod, Apocr. N. T. I. S. 374.

2. Juchasin, F. 55 : 2.

3. Luke, 1 : 27 ; 2 : 4-5.

4. Rom., 1 : 3.

5. Acts, 2 : 29-30. Cf. Ps., 132 : 11.

6. Mark, 10 : 47.

entry to Jerusalem,¹ can have the least weight against this double silence of Jesus and his companions. Another, and even more important, objection is that the author of the fourth Gospel does not accept the descent of Jesus from David. The objections raised about the Davidic descent are not answered or refuted by this evangelist,² and this fact proves that he did not think either of these things to be true. But these considerations did not weigh with the other two evangelists.

The Ebionites, the ancient Judo-Christians, rejected these genealogies³ and their opinion appears to be justified by the oldest traditions.

It is, therefore, evident that the belief in the Davidic descent of Jesus found acceptance only amongst a few of the early Christians.

The only fact which stands out signally in the two genealogies, and which remains uncontradicted, is that Jesus was the son of Joseph and his wife Mary. I will presently show that this fact finds ample support in the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament.

1. Mark, 11 : 9-10.

2. John, 7 : 40-42.

3. Epiphanius : *Haer*; 30 : 14.

CHAPTER 5

SON-GOD THEORY

I will not discuss the wonders with which Matthew and Luke adorn their accounts of the Nativity, for they are sheer hagiography. I have already mentioned that the appearance of the miraculous star, the visit of the Magi, the flight into Egypt and the Massacre of the Infants, on the one hand; the birth in the stable, the announcement to the Shepherds in the field, the presentation in the Temple, on the other, form groups of incidents which it is futile to endeavour to blend into one, and still more futile to connect in history.

The redactors have merely sought to make up for their lack of knowledge of facts by introducing fictitious narratives founded either on supposed prophetic writings, or upon the then popular myths and folklore. They were faced with a peculiar situation. They naturally wished to avoid, as far as possible, the ridiculous, and yet did not like to relinquish the supernatural origin of Jesus; likewise they were conscious of the fact that a natural explanation would lead to conclusions which would be revolting to the faith. They, therefore, preferred the adoption of the mythus, as this alone could obviate the difficulty.

Not only are Pagan gods known in Greek, Roman, Persian and Indian mythologies to have been raised by virgin birth, but many peculiar incidents have been attributed to them as were ascribed to Jesus. In fact, the substantial identity of Christian and Pagan beliefs was actually used, at a very early stage, as a method of overcoming Pagan criticism of Christian teachings. Thus Justin Martyr, writing in defence of Christianity in the first half of the second century, said:

By declaring our Master Jesus Christ to be born of a virgin without any human mixture, and to be crucified and dead and to have risen again, and ascended into heaven, we say no more of this than what you say of those whom you style the Sons of Jove. For you need not be told what a number of sons the writers among you assign to Jove. Mercury, the interpreter of Jove, is worshipped among you. You have Aesculapius, the physician stricken by a thunderbolt, and who afterwards ascended into heaven. You have Bacchus torn to pieces and Hercules burnt. You have Pollux and Castor, the Sons of Jove by Leda, and Perseus by Danae. Not to mention others, I would fain know why you always deify the emperors, and have a fellow at hand to testify that he saw Caesar mount to heaven. As to the Son of God, called Jesus, should we allow him to be no more than a man, yet the title of the son of God is very justifiable on account of his wisdom, considering you have your Mercury in worship under the title of the Logos and the Messenger of God. As to the objection of our Jesus being crucified, I say that suffering was common to all the fore-mentioned Sons of Jove, only they suffered another kind of death. As to his being born of a virgin, you have your Perseus to balance that. As to his curing the lepers, and the paralytic and such as were cripples from their birth, this is little more than what you say of Aesculapius.

Eusebius, the celebrated ecclesiastical historian, had also to appeal to a pagan oracle in similar circumstances and was forced to write to the heathen in the same strain:

But thou at least listen to thine own gods, to thy oracular deities themselves, who have borne witness and ascribed to our Savior, not imposture, but piety and wisdom, and ascent into heaven like theirs.

Bishop Gore, a *Modernist*, writing on the same subject in recent times to the adversaries of Christianity, said:

You say that we find in Christianity the relics of Paganism. On the contrary, we find in Paganism, intermingled with much that is false, superstitious and horrible, the anticipation of Christianity.¹

There was a time when Church dignitaries were bent on discovering more striking and more startling coincidences in pagan and primitive religions for use as “rays of confirmation of Gospel truths.” But this study of comparative mythology soon lost much of its charm. Professor Max Muller says:

The opinion that the pagan religions were mere corruptions of the religion of the Old Testament, once supported by men of high authority and great learning, is now as completely surrendered as the attempts to explain Greek and Latin as corruptions of Hebrew.²

The Christian dogmas—the idea of a Triune Godhead, of an Incarnate Saviour, of the Virgin Birth, of the Second Advent, of the Baptism, of the Sacraments, of the Communion of Saints—were taken for granted to be the distinctive possessions of Christianity; these were, it was alleged, marks clearly dividing it from any form of Paganism. So at least, it was contended at one time by Christians on the authority of Holy Writ. But they were shocked to find that they were completely mistaken. To their utter dismay every one of these dogmas and rituals was proved to have been held in some part or other of the Pagan world quite independently of Christian influence. They, therefore, to save their faces and religion, took a new turn and treated them as supporting the Christian Dogmas. To borrow a phrase of Paul, these ancient rites and beliefs, obscured by superstition and insufficient to satisfy the longing which brought them into existence, were designed “to serve as the schoolmasters” who would lead the heathen at length to Christ.

The subject of comparative mythology and the considerations of concrete parallels between the beliefs and teachings of ancient religions and those of Christianity are vast indeed. I cannot enter upon it. The late Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din has discussed this subject exhaustively in his well-known work, *The Sources of Christianity*. I may, however, mention that the celebrated text of the three witnesses of John, which is the foundation of the doctrine of the Trinity, has also been proved, by the labours of Newton, Porson and others, to be an interpolation; and Clement himself acknowledged that the verse is *not found*

1. Gore, *Studies in the Character of Christ*, 2 : 102.

2. Muller, *The Science of Religions*, 40.

in any ancient copy of the Bible. “Jesus,” he said, “taught the belief in One God, but Paul with the Apostle John, who was a Platonist, despoiled Christ’s religion of all its beauty and simplicity by introducing the incomprehensible Trinity of Plato, or the Triad of the East, and also deifying two of God’s Attributes—namely His Holy Spirit, or the *Agion Pneuma* of Plato and His Divine Intelligence, called by Plato the Logos (word).”

With this background, it is possible to see where the Son-God theory came from. It is significant that Paul, John and Mark, none of whom believed in the virgin birth, characterised Jesus as the Son of God. This description of Jesus, therefore, must be held to be prior to the establishment of the belief in the miracle mentioned by Matthew and Luke, and their assertions consequently do not arise out of it. On the contrary, the miracle followed the assertion of Paul. For as soon as they thought that not only had Jesus been raised up by God as a man full of the Holy Spirit to accomplish His plans and that his birth into this life had been Divinely predestined and glorified by the Holy Ghost, they attempted to signalise it by expressing this special relationship between Jesus and God. They described him as His son, because that was the only term in human language by which they could intelligibly, if not completely and adequately, express this relationship. Since the idea of the direct generation of a man by God could not appear to the Jews except as a monstrous absurdity, the expression was, in the first instance, only a metaphor.

It must, however, be conceded at once that the evangelists used the expression the *Son of God* in its literal sense. It appears in the Synoptic Gospels twenty-seven times and the word *Son*, in what may further be conceded in an equivalent sense, nine times. Of course, the numerical figure appears to be higher than it actually is because the same more or less identical passages are repeated in all three Gospels. The expression, however, is conspicuously used in all the most important events narrated in the Gospels: The Baptism,¹ the Temptation in the Wilderness,² the Transfiguration,³ the Interrogation by the high priest,⁴ the Declaration of the Centurion at Calvary⁵ and lastly the Confessions of the devils and demons whom Jesus cast out.⁶ All this kind of fantasy, in which the expression is used by a voice of heaven, alternating with hell, brings under suspicion everything connected with it, particularly as most of the passages as already mentioned, are the products of Christian forgeries. I mention but one: Mark was headed by someone: The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the *Son of God*.⁷ This descriptive title was a much later addition.⁸

It is noteworthy, however, that this expression occurs *once* only in the *Quelle*, in a famous legend which is reproduced in the Gospels⁹ and the significance of which I will discuss later on. In the Acts and the Pauline Epistles this appellation occurs in numerous places, but it finds no place at all in the Pastoral Epistles of James, Jude and I and II Peter.

1. Mark, 1 : 1-4.

2. Matt., 4 : 3.

3. Mark, 9 : 7.

4. Mark, 14 : 61.

5. Mark, 15 : 39.

6. Matt., 8 : 29; Mark, 3 : 11; 5 : 7.

7. Mark, 1 : 1.

8. Revised Version, P. 45.

9. Matt., 11 : 27; Luke, 10 : 22.

It has been asserted that so numerous references as are found in the New Testament prove conclusively that Jesus himself took the expression the *Son of God* in its most strict and exalted significance. In other words, it is urged that the mere repetition of a lie must carry the force of conviction and convert it into and establish its truth.

The title in question, if taken literally, expresses a relation with God so intimate that no mere man could lay claim to it without being guilty of the most heinous blasphemy. It comprises a definite, if not perfectly lucid, explanation of the mystery of the Trinity, for it defines the second person of the Triad. A mere assertion, therefore, even by Jesus himself, is not enough to reveal the true position. It must be shown to have been understood by those who were to be enlightened.

Now this expression was known to, and used by, Israel. In principle all Jews were sons of Jehovah, and it was this which distinguished them from the rest of mankind. In the Old Testament all human beings have been called the *sons of God*.¹ The Israel, in particular, were styled as the son of God (My son),² the sons of God (My sons),³ and the children of the Lord.⁴ This appellation was especially applied, as it was throughout the ancient East, to outstanding personages, the Prophets of God, because of the love which God bore them and the tutelary care which He exercised over them. During the post-exilic period, pious men and teachers were regarded as the sons of God.⁵ From the Second Psalm we gather that, just as earthly kings chose their sons to reign with or under them, so the Israelitish kings were invested by Jehovah, the Supreme Ruler, with governments of his favourite provinces. Thus the designation the *Son of God* was applicable to every Israelitish king who adhered to the principles of theocracy. In the Second Psalm we find the verse which according to Codex D plays an important part in the baptism of Jesus:

Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.⁶

This was nothing more than a part of the liturgy of the coronation rites of the Hasmonean kings.⁷

In all these cases, therefore, there never was any idea of expressing anything more than a close moral and religious connection with God than was, or is, enjoyed by ordinary human beings. There could be no question, even remotely, of any real sonship for the Jews, for that would have been to them the most preposterous absurdity and the grossest blasphemy. Thus at the time of Jesus, the expression *Son of God* was applied to one of two types: those who by their essential nature enjoyed a unique relationship with God—the heavenly kings, the Prophets; and the earthly kings, the Princes.

It is true that Israel expected the Messiah, whose coming they so ardently desired and awaited with high hopes, to set up a kingdom on earth and to be their redeemer. It is

1. Gen., 6 : 1-4; Job, 1 : 6; Dan., 3 : 25.

2. Exod., 4 : 22.

3. Isa., 45 : 11, Hos., 1 : 10.

4. Deut., 14 : 1; Isa., 1 : 2; Jer., 3 : 22.

5. Heit Muller, *Jesus*, 123; see also Wellhausen, *Das Evangelium Marci* : 6.

6. Ps., 2 : 7; cf. Luke, 3 : 22.

7. Duhm, *Die Psalmen*, 8.

equally true that the Messiah was commonly described by them as the best beloved son of God and the most powerful vicegerent of God on earth, but he was to be a *man among men*¹ and not a single passage in Jewish literature can be cited in which the title is given to the Messiah in the sense the Christians take it to be. By sheer dint of straining the texts, which do not carry conviction to any one except those who are already convinced, two passages are put forward. The early Christians were masters of the art of forgery. They always introduced passages in such a manner as I have explained in the case of Josephus that it is not easy to detect the forgery at first sight. However, the first passage is:

Because I and my son will be with you always on the paths of truth.²

This passage has been proved, and is now universally admitted, to be an interpolation. The only other passage in which the words "For my son Christ . . ." ³ occur is also a later text which is now to be found only in Christianized recensions.

If, then, such was the original historical significance of the epithet, it is not unreasonable to say that Jesus used it of himself in this significance only. It is true that the two verses in the Gospels can be stretched to mean something different. I will consider them presently. But apart from these two verses, nowhere is the narrowest, the merely physical, import of the term put into the mouth of Jesus. It is always others who apply this title to Jesus. Jesus, on the other hand, throughout his teachings, tenaciously maintained a distinction between himself and God. He clearly and repeatedly pointed out that he was only a human teacher and that Divine Attributes ought not to be applied to him. When tempted by Satan, who asked him to do various things if he was the son of God, Jesus drove him away by saying:

Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only thou shalt serve.⁴

When asked which was the first and great commandment in Law, Jesus said:

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.⁵

Jesus even renounced the predicate of goodness and insisted on its appropriation to God alone. When addressed as *Good Master* he replied:

Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God.⁶

So precise was Jesus that he even put his status lower than that of the Holy Spirit, for he said:

And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.⁷

1. Justin, *Dial. Cum Trypho*, 49.

2. Enoch, 105 : 2.

3. 4 Edros, 7 : 28-29.

4. Matt., 4 : 10.

5. Matt., 22 : 37.

6. Matt., 19 : 17; Mark, 10 : 18; Luke, 18 : 19.

7. Matt., 12 : 32.

Jesus knew and understood the metaphorical significance of the term: *The Children of God*;¹ and when he spoke of himself as one of them, he applied the term in its metaphorical and not physical sense. This is abundantly clear from the following incident recorded in the Gospels:

Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them: Many good works have I showed you from *the Father*; for which of these works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him saying, For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because thou being a *man* makest thyself God.

Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your Law: *I said, ye are gods*? If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken, say ye of him, whom *the Father* hath sanctified and sent into the world, thou blasphemest because I said I am a son of God.²

These verses, occurring as they do in John, speak for themselves and a comment is hardly necessary. Jesus was quoting from the Psalms:

I have said, ye are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High.³

And arguing that if the Judges, as God's representatives, could be called "gods"⁴ or *sons of the Most High*, by God Himself, he could not possibly be guilty if he spoke of himself as a son of God in that metaphorical sense. Christian apologists have spilt oceans of ink to explain away the incompatibility of these verses with their Son-God theory and to establish that "these verses neither imply any degradation of the Divinity of Jesus nor do they present Jesus to be a mere man."

But I repeat that Jesus was very precise in this matter. He always spoke of himself as the *Son of Man*. This expression, as I will show later, meant a mere man, and those who heard Jesus took him to be a *man*⁵ and nothing more. He even spoke of himself as a *man* for he said:

But now ye seek to kill me, a *man* that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God; this did not Abraham.⁶

Jesus also spoke of himself as a Prophet,⁷ and indeed those who listened to him took him to be a Prophet⁸ and a teacher.⁹ Even his disciples took him to be a Prophet only.¹⁰ Peter, it is true, when questioned by Jesus as to what he thought of him, replied: *Thou art Christ*, the son of the living God,¹¹ but Jesus not only then and there contradicted him by using the phrase *Son of Man* for himself¹² but he also repudiated vehemently this appellation, for:

1. Matt., 5 : 9.

2. John, 10 : 31-36. I have used *the* in place of *my* and *a* in place of *the* as given in the Revised Version, p. 1184.

3. Ps., 82 : 6.

4. Exod., 22 : 28.

5. Matt., 8 : 27; 13 : 56; Mark, 2 : 7; 6 : 2; John, 11 : 37.

6. John, 8 : 40.

7. Matt., 13 : 57, Mark, 6 : 4; Luke, 4 : 24; John, 4 : 44.

8. Matt., 16 : 14; Mark, 8 : 28; Luke, 9 : 19.

9. John, 3 : 2.

10. Luke, 24 : 19.

11. Matt., 16 : 16.

12. Mark, 8 : 31; Luke, 9 : 22.

He straightly charged them and *commanded* them to tell no one that thing.¹

I need hardly repeat that the phrase ascribed to Peter was in fact a later forgery.²

I take another incident. The Sanhedrin had assembled to find Jesus guilty of a charge of blasphemy; yet they could not get witnesses. If Jesus had been proclaiming his sonship of God to the *multitudes*, as Christians would have us believe, surely the elders ought not to have felt any difficulty in getting the two requisite witnesses, particularly when the Scribes and Pharisees were always present in the crowds which used to gather around Jesus. It is, however, alleged that Jesus asserted before the Sanhedrin that he was the Son of God. Luke narrates that the Jews questioned Jesus:

Art thou then the son of God? And he said unto them, *Ye say that I am.*³

Apart from the fact that in the very preceding verse he had told the elders that he was *Son of Man*, he wished to clear the position and meant to convey: *Ye say that I am, but I do not.* This was a peculiar but usual method of giving the negative answer. Matthew gives the answer as: "Thou hast said."⁴ Peake commenting on this verse says:

We should perhaps take the ambiguous reply, "Thou hast said," as a refusal.⁵

The Jews, however, were bent on misconstruing his reply and did take it as an admission, but not so Pilate. The charge of the Jews which would have brought the case within the jurisdiction of Pilate, was that Jesus had claimed to be king of the Jews. Therefore, Pilate questioned him:

Art thou the king of the Jews? And he answered him and said, *Thou sayest it?*⁶

Pilate took the answer, as should have been done by the Jews, to be a denial of the charge:

And said Pilate to the chief priest and to the people, I find no fault in *this man.*⁷

It is obvious, therefore, that Jesus had equally denied the charge of having ever claimed to be *Son of God* in the narrow sense, and it is merely a puerile and childish prank of Christians to construe these verses as supporting the godhead of Jesus.

As I have said, two verses, and no more, one in Mark and the other in the *Logia*, put words into the mouth of Jesus which, if read superficially, show that he did designate himself as the Son of God. It should not be forgotten that Jesus spoke Aramaic and not Greek; and when for instance he said *Abba*, Mark correctly translated it as *Father*,⁸ but Matthew converted it into *O my father*,⁹ while Luke and John improved it as *My father*,¹⁰ and the editors of the Revised Version have to mention time and again that *the* should be read in place of *my*. There is another subtle way in which the redactors tried

1. Luke, 9 : 21. cf. Mark, 8 : 30.

2. Revised Version, p. 1177. cf. John, 6 : 69.

3. Luke, 22 : 70.

4. Matt., 26 : 64.

5. Peake, *Commentary on the Bible*, 722.

6. Luke, 23 : 3.

7. Luke, 23 : 4.

8. Mark, 14 : 36.

9. Matt., 26 : 39.

10. See Revised Version, p. 1190; John, 14 : 28.

to impress the physical sonship of Jesus. When any one *e.g.*, the Centurion, said of Jesus that he was *a* son of God, the redactors changed it into *the* son of God.¹ Such forgeries were so cleverly made that they almost escape detection. They also *prima facie* established the alleged fact, carried conviction and left an everlastingly wrong impression. If, however, we read the Gospels with these forgeries in mind, the distinction which is sought to be made disappears from the source. Thus we read:

And I appoint unto you the kingdom, as *my* father hath appointed it unto me.²

This verse with *the* substituted for *my* can be subscribed to by the followers of any other denomination. Thus if we read the two verses with these changes in mind, it will become evident that even they do not support the sonship of Jesus. The first passage reads:

But that day and that hour (*i.e.*, the Day of Judgment) knoweth no *man*, no not the angels which are in heaven, *neither the son*, but the father.³

The second verse is:

All things are delivered unto me *of the* Father: and no man knoweth *the Son*, but the father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the son, and he to whomsoever the son will reveal him.⁴

The first verse embodies a confession of Jesus of his limited knowledge and avowed ignorance of the Last Day of Judgment. The words *neither the son* are omitted from the Authorised Version of Matthew's⁵ though many ancient authorities contain them. According to Dummelow this omission was due to the fact that they were looked upon "as being a difficulty to faith."⁶ For similar reasons both Luke and John omitted the entire verse. This verse led the Arians to believe and teach that Jesus was ignorant of the Divine Will and Athanasius had to explain to them that "ignorance is part of human nature of Jesus." But if we read this verse with the second verse and with the verse preceding it, the meaning becomes abundantly clear. This preceding verse reads:

I thank thee, O father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes.⁷

Thus while Jesus in one place confesses ignorance of the Divine Will, he in another place thanks God for His revelation to him and goes on to explain that no one else knoweth of His Will, His revelation, until he discloses it to him. There is nothing extraordinary in such an assertion. The Divine revelation to a Prophet of God is unknown to men till the Prophet himself discloses it.

1. Matt., 27 : 54. See revised version, 1096.

2. Luke, 22 : 29.

3. Mark, 13 : 32.

4. Matt., 11 : 27; *cf.* Luke, 10 : 22.

5. Matt., 24 : 36.

6. Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, 731.

7. Matt., 11 : 25.

But even this explanation does not remove the difficulty of belief in the divinity of Jesus. His ignorance of things around him is incomprehensible if he was Divine and therefore Omniscient. As the "Very God of the Very God" he should have known that prescience shown by him would be a proof of his Divinity, and yet he deliberately, and I think intentionally, time and again confessed his lack of knowledge of the unseen. I give but a few instances which exhibit this ignorance of Jesus.

When a certain woman "which had an issue of blood twelve years" came behind Jesus and touched the border of his garment, Jesus did not know and had to ask: "Who touched my clothes?"¹

Jesus did not know whether anything could be found on a fig tree except leaves.² Jesus said that of his own he could do nothing and confessed:

I can of my own self do nothing.³

And went on to say:

If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.⁴

But I must revert to the two verses under discussion. It is hardly necessary for me to point out that they, if the Christian interpretation be correct, are fundamentally inconsistent with each other. The whole periscope of which these passages form a part is called *The Prayer of Thanksgiving*. But the very clearly marked rhythm of the whole of this prayer gives it the appearance of a piece of liturgy of an Eastern religion, e.g., Ea said to Marduk: "My son, what I know, thou knowest." Further the fundamental ideas and the characteristic expressions have every appearance of having come from the *Wisdom of Jesus*, the son of Sirach, and verses of *Sirach* can be easily picked out which compare with those of this prayer.⁵

It is not difficult to cite similar passages from the Old Testament⁶ which may equally have served as the source of these verses and from which the redactors may have copied. If such be the case, the two verses would have to be given the same significance as that obtaining in the Old Testament, and which has already been explained by me.

But to find the real explanation of the introduction of the Son-God theory into the simple faith of Jesus we shall have to look to the Greek atmosphere in which Paul created Christianity. It was there that the word *Christ* became a proper name of Jesus. They spoke of *Jesus Christ* as of *Julius Caesar*. I am not really concerned here with the problem of the Christological development. I merely wish to point out that the Messiah to Jews was to be a *servant (Ebed)* of God and not the son of God in the physical sense;

1. Mark, 5 : 25-30.

2. Matt., 21 : 18-19.

3. John, 5 : 30, see also John, 8 :28; Matt., 20 : 20-23.

4. John, 5 : 31.

5. The beginning of the prayer in Matthew is indicated by *Sir* 2 : 1; Matt., 11 : 28-a and *Sir* 2 : 23; Matt., 11 : 28-b and *Sir* 24 : 2; Matt., 11 : 29-a and *Sir* 6 : 24; Matt., 11 : 29-b and *Sir* 6 : 28; Matt., 11 : 30 and *Sir* 6 : 29.

6. Isa., 55 : 1-3; Zech., 9 : 9; Jer., 6 : 16, etc..

but on Greek soil the Christological belief found an environment very different from that of Palestine. There the idea of procreation of a human being by gods was current and the relationship between Jesus and God could shock no one. On the contrary, the term *Son of God* was more likely to arouse sympathy in that quarter than the Jewish name of Messiah. Hence it was among the Greeks that the expression arose.

In the second place, it was assisted by a phrase which Jesus used and which was used by those around him to express his intimate relations with God, namely, and without any doubt, *ebad Jehovah*, the servant of God. This expression was used in the Septuagint to designate those who were especially devoted to fulfilling the Will of Jehovah.¹ In this sense it was often applied to Israel as a whole.² It was applied to Moses,³ David⁴ and other prophets.⁵

Such an expression, so consecrated by the Scriptures as the designation of a prophet of God, could hardly, it seems, have failed to be applied to Jesus. But we find that in the Gospels the phrase was applied to him *once* only,⁶ and that for a reason. The redactors could not avoid this description because they were quoting a passage from the Old Testament⁷ and showing its fulfillment in Jesus.⁸ Again, I suppose by an oversight Jesus is spoken of as a *servant* of God in three places in the Acts,⁹ and once by Paul.¹⁰

The word *ebed* was unfortunately translated into the Greek word *pais* meaning a *servant* and also a *child*. And from *child* to *son* was an easy transition for the Greeks. But it soon took the Christological idea expressed in the Epistles of Paul. It found its Pauline and Johannine justifications in the doctrine of Divine pre-existence and of the incarnation of Jesus. The legend of the virgin birth was a "Consequential Relief," and the reassuring alterations in, and additions to, the texts provided its confirmation. I quote but one instance. In the beginning, according to Luke when Jesus was baptized, the Lord had said: *This day have I begotten thee*,¹¹ but it soon became changed into: *thou art my beloved son, in thee I am well pleased*.¹² Among the Gentiles Jesus became The son of God from the day of his Baptism, but in the Rabbinical traditions Jesus continued to be a man among men, a man of humble status.¹³

In view of this explanation, the two verses do not present any further difficulty. If the word *servant* is substituted for *son*, the passages do not establish any relation of sonship with God. The compilers of the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, while commenting on these two verses, and taking the two passages together, say:

We must infer that Jesus had indeed communion with God *but nothing beyond it*: but this connection was under such limitations that the attribute of

1. Ps., 69 : 17 A.V.; *Wisd.*, 2 : 13.

2. Isa., 41 : 8; 42 : 19; 44 : 1, etc.

3. Neh., 1 : 7.

4. Ps., 18 : 1. Intro.

5. Gen., 9 : 25; 2 Sam. 2 : 12, etc.

6. Matt., 12 : 18.

7. Isa., 42 : 1.

8. Matt., 12 : 17.

9. Acts, 3 : 13 (R.V. 1203); 4 : 27 (R.V. 1204); 4 : 30. (R.V. 1204).

10. Phili., 2 : 7.

11. Western Text and Codes D.

12. Luke, 3 : 22.

13. Langrange, *Le Messianisme Chehes Juis*, p. 223.

Goodness as well as absolute knowledge belonged to God, *and hence the boundary line between the Divine and human was strictly preserved.*¹

A prophecy in Isaiah² was supposed to have led to the belief that Jesus, as the Messiah, would be born of a virgin by means of Divine agency. I will explain later how the word *virgin* was dishonestly introduced into this verse. But this forgery led to a philosophical mythus resulting in faith unknown to Jesus. The theory of the incarnation of God was merely a departure from this faith to a dogmatic assertion. What had to be was actually made to have been, and the redactors of the Gospels introduced it accordingly.³ The historical truth that Jesus was the offspring of an ordinary marriage, which would have maintained the dignity of Jesus as a prophet of God, was perverted into a supernatural and mythical conception of Jesus. Paulus, from a true perception of the identical character of the two son-Gods, compares Jesus with the son of Apollo and the virgin mother Perictiones. To this mythus must be added the Jewish idea that the Holy Spirit sometimes descended upon its choicest *sons of God*. The title "son of God," coupled with the factors already mentioned, led to a more precise interpretation and later to a literal acceptance. The prophecy of Isaiah was matured by the phrase:

Thou art my son; this day I have begotten thee.⁴

Thus a physical union with God was stressed and the words *son of Virgin* and *son of God* competed with each other; and with the Pagan deities in the background, the Divine agency became substituted for a human participation; and Jesus became another son of God through a Virgin. This legend, which was thus substituted for a humble reality, was old, and the reason for the substitution was also very old.

1. *Ency. Biblica*, Art: *Son of God* (Italics are mine).

2. Isa., 7 : 14.

3. De Wette, *Bible Dogma*, S. 281.

4. Ps., 2 : 7.

CHAPTER 6

VIRGIN BIRTH

The Apocryphal and the Canonical Gospels give different versions of the conception and birth of Jesus. They describe the various stages from a simple and natural occurrence to a minute and miraculously embellished story in which the events are traced back to the very earliest date. Mark and John content themselves with the mention of Mary as the mother and of Joseph as the father of Jesus.¹ Matthew and Luke, however, give details of the circumstances attending the conception and birth of Jesus as the Messiah, and are at pains to fulfill, as far as possible, all the prophecies of the Old Testament in the person of Jesus. Matthew is out to meet all the objections as may, or could, have been raised against the virgin birth theory, at the time this Gospel was written or revised.² Both of them, however, presuppose Mary to be the *espoused* wife of Joseph. The Apocryphal Gospel—the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*, the *Gospel of the Ebionites*, and some others, with most of which the early Christian Fathers agreed, narrate the origin of Jesus as the result of a lawful marriage between Joseph and Mary.

Apart from the mere physical considerations, the Gospels rely on Divine Omnipotence with which, of course, nothing is impossible. But by virtue of His Unity and Wisdom, the Almighty God never exerts His Divine Omnipotence without adequate motive. Further, nothing less than an object worthy of God and at the same time unattainable except by a deviation from His ordinary laws of nature, which He himself has established, could constitute a sufficient cause for the suspension by God of His laws.

Corinthus, one of the very early Christians, arguing against the virgin birth, urged that

It is impossible, because by the concurrence of two sexes is a new human being generated, and that the contrary would be most remarkable departure from all natural laws.³

Forced with the strength of his reasoning the Christian apologists, opposing Corinthus, did not hesitate to reduce Jesus to a *worm*, for they alleged that the birth of Jesus was in a manner like that of a worm and asserted that the following passages applied to Jesus:

I am a worm, not a man.⁴

The *son of man*, which is a worm.⁵

The Christian apologists of a period a little later, however, had to take another line

1. Mark, 6 : 3; John, 1 : 45; 6 : 42.

2. Matt., 1 : 18-25.

3. *Hom., Lucan*, 13.

4. Ps., 22 : 6-8.

5. Job. 25 : 6.

of argument. They maintained that Jesus had come for the redemption of mankind and, therefore, had to be severed from all original sin from his birth.¹ But to this is a simple answer: the exclusion of the paternal participation is wholly insufficient because the inheritance of original sin was from Eve and, therefore, the maternal participation should have been avoided as was done in the case of Melchisedec, whom Paul described as having been born without father and without mother.² It is then argued that the participation of the Holy Ghost was meant to purify the maternal participation. But this could have been done without violation of natural laws. In any case, nowhere is such a conception ascribed to Mary. The expression *the Holy Ghost* is specially characteristic of the New Testament and occurs in it eighty-one times. The Jews did not regard the Spirit as personal and, therefore, Mary must have understood the words: *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee* as identical with *the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee*. But not so with the evangelists to whom, about a century afterwards, the term "Holy Ghost" had become practically a proper name.

Leaving these special pleadings of Christian apologists and their refutations aside, for they really do not lead us anywhere, I will now take up the evangelic records. The virgin birth, though definitely asserted in Matthew³ and Luke,⁴ finds no echo in any other part of the New Testament. Mark is totally silent. If such a remarkable event had in fact happened, and he had believed in it, would he have remained silent? The answer is obvious; but against this, a reference is made to the description of Jesus in Mark as "son of God,"⁵ and it has been argued that Mark would not have styled Jesus as such if he did not believe in the virgin birth. I admit the force of this argument and one might have conceded the virgin birth theory on this argument alone if there had been any basis for attributing the alleged words to Mark. These very words were also used by Luke.⁶ But both the verses are the result of pious forgeries by early Christians. In Mark the words were merely added.⁷ The Sinaitic Syriac, which is of great authority, and the early patristic traditions represented by Irenaeus and Origen, followed by Basil and Jerome, omit the words. In Luke the phrase, *the Son of God*, was substituted for the word *Holy*.⁸ These facts demolish the argument; but, in any case, the words, *son of God*, are to be interpreted in a metaphorical sense and not in a physical sense. The phrase *son of Mary*⁹ can be explained by the fact that Joseph was dead when these words were written, for he had died during the ministry of Jesus. I would, by way of analogy, mention that the late King Edward VII is known as the son of the late Queen Victoria. No one would dream of suggesting any supernatural birth because of this fact. This kind of argument clearly establishes that Christian apologists are on their hind legs to prove the virgin birth theory. Besides, Jesus is really spoken of as the son of Joseph.¹⁰

Mark, I repeat, ought to have known of this virgin birth, and since he does not mention it, it stands to reason that either he was ignorant of it or he did not accept it.

1. Olshausen, *Bibl. Comm.*, 8. 49.

2. Heb., 7 : 1-3.

3. Matt., 1 : 18-25.

4. Luke, 1 : 5-80.

5. Mark, 1 : 1.

6. Luke, 1 : 35.

7. See marginal note in the Revised Version, P. 1098.

8. See Revised Version, P. 1126.

9. Mark, 6 : 3.

10. John, 1 : 45 ; 6 : 42.

There are still some traces which show that in the *Urmarcus* it was at the time of baptism of Jesus, and not at the moment of his conception, that the Holy Spirit entered his humanity. Mark, therefore, could not have believed in the virgin birth of Jesus.

John is equally silent, and his silence is all the more significant since it was he, as is supposed, to whom Jesus, while on the cross, entrusted the care of Mary.¹ He, therefore, would have been all the more likely person to know all the facts about the occurrence. It is argued that John believed that Jesus was the incarnation of God, of the *Logos*, and was co-eternal with God. Christian apologists refer to:

Which were born out of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.²

and argue that John was not depending on any earthly father. To this I reply: he was equally not depending on any earthly mother. To cite this passage in favour of the virgin birth theory is grossly to misconstrue it. It refers in fact to *the sons of God* mentioned in the preceding verse. In any case, the incarnation of the *Logos* in Jesus does not imply that the man Jesus was exempt from the laws of human generation, for it was at his baptism that, according to John also, the *Logos* descended into him. John merely elevates the idea of Mark and preserves it in its external form. Accordingly, he never misses an opportunity of stating that Jesus is the son of Joseph. He records one of Jesus' disciples saying:

Philip findeth Nathanael and saith unto him: we have found him of whom Moses in the Law and prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, *the son of Joseph*.³

And again:

And they said, Is not this Jesus, *the son of Joseph*, whose *father* and mother we know . . . ?⁴

John could never have recorded these incidents if they had, to his mind, conflicted with his theory.

Turning to the Apostles, we do not find the slightest reference to virgin birth in any of their Epistles. Paul speaks of the descent of Jesus according to the flesh⁵ and he says:

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his son, *born of a woman, born under the law*.⁶

Now if this verse is read without forcing its meaning it will appear to indicate the normal birth of a Jewish child. Paul makes two definite statements. He says that Jesus was *born of a woman*. He does not say Jesus was born of a virgin; because he knew of Jesus' human generation, and asserted

Jesus Christ, our Lord, was *born* of the seed of David, according to the flesh.⁷

1. John, 19 : 27.

2. John, 1 : 13.

3. John, 1 : 45.

4. John, 6 : 42.

5. Rom., 1 : 3.

6. Gal., 4 : 4. I have used the word *born* instead of *made*, as it is so given in the Revised Version, P. 1288.

7. Rom., 1 : 3, I have used the word *born* instead of *made*. See R.V., P. 1241.

The expression *born of a woman* is not peculiar to Paul. In the biblical sense, it has a significance of its own; and Paul must be held to have used the phrase in that sense only. In the Old Testament, when anyone's normal human birth had to be described, he was referred to as having been *born of a woman*. Jesus used this phrase in this very sense regarding John the Baptist, and the rest of the people of his time, when he said:

Verily I say unto you, among them that are *born of women*, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.¹

In the Old Testament we read:

Man, that is *born of a woman*, is of a few days and full of trouble.²

When Paul, therefore, described Jesus as *born of a woman* he meant nothing more than that Jesus was born in accordance with human nature with all its conditions.

A passage in Isaiah³ has been referred to to indicate that a virgin was meant by Paul. It is merely a play upon the Greek word *Parthenos* (virgin), which does not appear in the Hebrew text, and thus a deliberately dishonest translation of an Hebrew word *Haalmah* (woman) has led to confusion where none existed.⁴ Dummelow admits that: "the Hebrew word is not the distinctive one for virginity."⁵

The Rev. Prof. Donaldson in his discussion of the meaning of the Hebrew word *Haalmah* says:

Every one who is acquainted with the Hebrew word will be obliged to admit that the designation in question cannot mean anything more than a young or *newly married woman*.⁶

It may also be mentioned that the same word, *Haalmah*, was used for Rebecca and she was not a virgin at that time.⁷

But Paul makes the matter absolutely clear, for he asserts that Jesus was *born under the law*. What was this Law? I will let Jesus give the answer:

But from the beginning of the creation God made them males and females, for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife, and the twain shall be one flesh. So then they are no more twain, but one flesh.⁸

By this saying of Jesus not only is *the law* explained whereby the generation of human beings is made clear, but the other phrase which Paul used about Jesus being "born of the seed of David according to *the flesh*" becomes abundantly clear if we read it with the assertion that the Messiah had to be "the fruit of the loins of David."⁹

1. Matt., 11 : 11; Luke, 7 : 28.

2. Job., 14 : 1; see also 4 Esdras, 6 : 6; 7 : 46; 8 : 35, etc.

3. Isa., 7 : 14.

4. Revised Version, P. 760.

5. Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, 148. The nearest Hebrew equivalent of

"Virgin" is Bethulah.

6. Donaldson, *The Christian Orthodoxy*, 476.

7. Gen., 24 : 43.

8. Mark, 10 : 6-8; cf. Gen., 1 : 27; 2 : 24; 5 : 2; Eph., 5 : 31.

9. Acts, 2 : 30; cf. Ps., 132 : 11.

Finally, in the prologue of the Epistle to the Romans it is clearly stated that:

Jesus . . . which was born of the seed of David *according to the flesh*, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the *spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead*.¹

The words of Paul, therefore, leave no room for any doubt at all, for no one can identify the antithesis of flesh and spirit with maternal human participation in the conception of Jesus. Jesus, in the words of Paul born according to the flesh in the natural manner, became the Son of God *according to the spirit* at his resurrection and not at his birth. In other words, according to Paul, though Jesus was a *man in flesh*, yet he was the *son of God* in *spirit* only. The latter statement, of course, is a mere Christological assertion, and is also found in the Acts, in which the Messianic exultation of Jesus still dates from the resurrection.

“Neither Paul nor Mark,” say the compilers of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* “betray any knowledge of the tradition (of virgin birth). It was unknown to the Apostles, and did not appear to have formed part of the Apostolic preachings.”² Had such an event taken place, Paul would certainly have known of it and would have been the first to broadcast it to the world.

The other Apostles were also ignorant of the virgin birth and are equally silent. James the Just, brother of Jesus, was the head of the Church at Jerusalem. He belonged to the Ebionite sect. He with them believed that:

Jesus is the Messiah, yet *a mere man*, born by natural generation to Joseph and Mary.³

In the Gospel according to the Hebrews it is narrated that Mary had been married to Joseph and had given birth to Jesus in a natural manner.⁴ Jerome has preserved a verse from this Gospel which says:

The mother and father of Jesus were present at his baptism.⁵

Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Gibson recovered an old Syriac manuscript of the Gospel in a monastery on Mount Sinai. In this was found an explicit statement:

Jesus' father was Joseph and his mother Mary.⁶

The History of Joseph (the carpenter) tells us that Jesus at the death of Joseph, uttered the following lamentations:

Not a single limb of it shall be broken, nor shall any hair of thy head be changed. Nothing of thy body shall perish, *O! my father*, Joseph, but it will remain entire and uncorrupted even until the banquet of the Thousand Years.⁷

1. Rom., 1 : 3-4.

2. *Ency. Brit.*, 14th Edn., Vol. 13, 20. (Words in brackets are mine.)

3. Hastings, *History of the Apostolic Church*, 318-32. See also Mosheim *Ecclesiastical History*,

Vol. 1, 214.

4. Gospel of Heb., 2 : 3.

5. *Ibid.*, 3 : 2.

6. Lewis, *The Old Syriac Gospel*, 2.

7. Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, 434.

The object of writing this History is revealed in the book in the words of the Apostles' address to Jesus:

Thou hast ordered us to go into all the world and to preach thy holy Gospel, and thou hast said: "Relate to them the death of my father, Joseph, and celebrate to him with annual solemnity a festival and a sacred Day."¹

Thus we get the origin of the festival of St. Joseph's Day.

In one of the books of the Samaritan Chronicles there occurs the following passage:

In the time of Jehonathan, there was . . . Jesus, the son of Mari, son of Joseph, the Carpenter . . . at Jerusalem, in the reign of Tiberius . . .²

Jesus was a Jew, and to the Jews amongst whom he lived and preached, he was *under the Law*. The Jews of his time, and of Galilee in particular, who knew him and his parents, did not believe in his Divine Mission or his virgin birth. They had two alternatives before them. They could either believe him to be a legitimate offspring of Joseph and Mary or treat him, I hate to use the word but for special reasons have no option, as a *bastard*.

Jesus, we are told, entered the synagogues and preached there.³ Had the Jews looked upon Jesus as a bastard, they would not have allowed him to attend, much less preach in, the synagogues for it was ordained that:

A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of *the Lord*.⁴

In face of this clear injunction, and what we are told of Jesus' behaviour in the Temple at Jerusalem, can anyone seriously urge that the Jews of his time did not look upon him as a legitimate offspring of Israel?

In the writing of an ancient Rabbi, who wrote just when virgin birth was first attributed to Jesus, we read:

Jesus was as legitimate as any other Jewish child in Galilee. His father was an artisan, a carpenter. The son learned the trade of his father and made goads and yokes. . . .⁵

A happy chance has preserved the following Talmudic expression which from the Jewish point of view lends support to the Rabbinical writings referred to above:

Jesus was a carpenter, a son of a carpenter.⁶

After taking into consideration the contemporary writings and other Rabbinical literature the compilers of the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* express themselves in the following terms:

1. Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible, 434.

2. *Journale Asiatique*, 1869 ; 2 : 430.

3. Matt., 4 : 23; 9 : 35; 12 : 9; 21 : 12; Mark, 1 : 21, 39; 6 : 2; Luke, 4 : 33, 44; John, 6 : 59, etc.

4. Deut., 23 : 2.

5. *Ab Zar*, 3 b.

6. *J. Yeban*, 3 : 2.

The Jews, who are represented as inimical to Jesus in the Canonical Gospels, took him to be legitimate and born in the ordinary natural way.¹

Whiston in his *Dissertation I* to the works of Josephus remarks:

All the believing Jews and all the rest of the Nazarene Jews esteemed Jesus with one consent, as a mere man, the son of Joseph and Mary.²

Hastings also says that:

It is quite clear that Jesus was popularly looked upon by his contemporaries as Joseph's son by natural generation.³

I have already mentioned that Jesus' parents had named him *Joshua* which means *son of a father*. It has been well said that there lay a deep significance in this name also. It was a warning, nay a counterblast, to such as should falsely ascribe virgin birth to Jesus.

I have so far refrained from discussing the versions of Matthew and Luke, and before I do so I must refer to another matter. So long as the early Christians did not assert the virgin birth of Jesus, none of his contemporaries challenged his legitimacy. But the moment Jesus was raised to the pedestal of godhead, the imaginations of the hagiographers had full scope to indulge in the most affecting or foolish fabrications according to their literary skill. In the second century they attributed supernatural birth to Jesus. The Pagans retorted with the charge of illegitimacy. The Christian legendary cult has to thank itself for this calumny against Jesus and Mary. Josephus had provided the Pagans with a parallel:⁴ for he records that Mundus, a Roman knight, won Paulina, the chaste wife of a Roman noble, to his wishes by causing her to be invited by a priest of Isis into the temple of the goddess, under a pretext that the god Anubias desired to embrace her. In the innocence of faith Paulina resigned herself and would perhaps have afterwards believed that she gave birth to the son of this god had not the intriguer, with bitter scorn, soon after disclosed to her the true state of affairs.

The Pagans substituted Mary for Paulina and Joseph Pandera, a soldier, for the Roman knight mentioned by Josephus.

This calumny was taken up by the Jews of the second century, and found a place in the Talmud. Jesus was then styled as *ben Pandera*. It is this calumny of which Celsus accuses the Jews and which is referred to by Origen⁵ but of which the Jews of the time of Jesus were ignorant and innocent.

Now let me look into the Gospels generally and find the position of Jesus and his mother. It is very peculiar that there is no retrospective reference to the virgin birth of Jesus in the New testament. Not one of the incidents contained in the New Testament allude even indirectly to this outstanding miracle.

1. *Jewish Ency.*, Vol. 7, 170.

2. *Ibid.*, Vol. 3 : 276.

3. Hastings, *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, 808.

4. Josephus, *Antiq.*, 18 : 3-4.

5. Origen., *C : Celsus*, 1 : 32.

Let us first listen to Jesus himself. According to the Gospels, he never made any reference, nor appealed, to the manner of his birth in support of his claim. On the other hand, however, we find expressions used by him which exclude the idea of a virgin birth. In Matthew he declared that he cast out devils by “the spirit of God.”¹ This assertion rested on the basis that the Spirit of God filled his body, but not upon the idea that it was by the Divine Spirit that he had been begotten. This saying of Jesus clearly proves that he was absolutely ignorant about his supernatural birth, and he never realized that God had in any manner connected his mission on earth with the peculiar manner of his birth. Surely such a saying of Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels, would have been an improbability if Jesus had possessed the consciousness that his mother had been deemed by God to be worthy of a position so exalted, so singular, as the hagiographers have ascribed to her. I will presently show that he actually thought otherwise. In any case it can hardly be suggested that his parents could have concealed the happy event. It is recorded that when Joseph and Mary took the child Jesus to the Temple for purification, Simon took the child and prayed that, as he had then seen Christ, he might be permitted to die.

And his father Joseph and his mother marvelled at the things spoken of him.²

And we are further told that they took him to the feast of the Passover at Jerusalem when he was twelve years of age. After a day’s journey on their return, they found Jesus missing, and had to go back to Jerusalem in search of him. They found him after a search of three days, sitting in the Temple, in the midst of the Scribes, both hearing them and asking them questions. The narrative goes on:

And when they saw him *they were amazed*, and his mother said unto him: son, why has thou thus dealt with us? *Behold thy father and I* have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them: How is it that ye sought me? *Wist Ye* not that I must be about my Father’s business? *And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.*³

Naturally, Joseph and Mary, knowing that Jesus was their offspring in the natural physical sense, failed to understand a child of twelve speaking of someone else as his father. This incident of all strikes at the very foot of the virgin birth theory, and establishes beyond the least shade or shadow of doubt that at least his parents had no knowledge of it. Of course, they could not have even dreamt of it, as they knew otherwise. Their lack of understanding Jesus thus becomes intelligible; while, on the other hand, it is rendered absolutely incomprehensible if supernatural birth, to the knowledge of his parents, is ascribed to Jesus. And would they not talk of this miraculous event between themselves and to others? In anticipation of such an objection the redactor gives us an answer, impossible to believe. He says:

But his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.⁴

1. Matt., 12 : 28.

2. Luke, 2 : 33.

3. Luke, 2 : 48-50.

4. Luke, 2 : 51.

Anyhow, we are not told that Joseph also behaved in this foolish manner.

The terms in which Jesus referred to his mother are also incompatible with the virgin birth theory. I will narrate but two incidents. Jesus had gone with his disciples, we are told, to a marriage party and had asked for wine. Mary, who was also present, informed him that there was none in the house. He at once turned on her, and

Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee?¹

On another occasion, it is recorded that the Jews, alluding to the Holy Ghost having descended on Jesus at his baptism, alleged that Jesus was possessed of an unclean spirit. Jesus was discussing the question thus raised, when:

There came then his brethren and his mother and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him. And the multitude sat about him and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And he answered them saying, Who is my mother or my brethren? And he looked round about on them, which sat about him, and said: Behold, my mother and brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.²

These harsh sayings of Jesus conclusively prove that Jesus was dissociating himself from his mother, brothers and sisters because they, according to the Gospels, would not believe in him. This fact is further made clear by John:

Neither did his brethren believe in him.³

The context makes it quite clear that John was speaking of the blood-brothers of Jesus. It is not surprising, if the virgin birth theory did not exist at the time, that they did not believe in him. We know that James the Just did not accept him till after the crucifixion. The last passage stands connected with a circumstance which Matthew tries to disguise and Luke omits altogether and which is preserved only by Mark. He narrates:

And when his *kinsmen* heard of it, they went out to lay hold of him; for they said *he is mad*.⁴

Before proceeding further I must point out the manner in which, for obvious reasons, an effort has been made to dilute the force of this incident. The word *kinsmen* has been replaced by the word *friends* and the words *He is beside himself* have been substituted for *He is mad*.

Who these *kinsmen*, or *friends*, were we learn from Matthew⁵ and Mark:⁶ they were his mother and brethren. They had set out from Nazareth and arrived at a time when he was having a controversy with the Scribes. Even if we regard it as possible that Mary chose to keep her secret, she, knowing of his supernatural origin, would never have thought of him as *mad* or *beside himself*. Jesus' saying on another

1. John, 2 : 4.

2. Mark, 3 : 31-35; cf. Matt., 12 : 48-50.

3. John, 7 : 5.

4. Mark, 3 : 21.

5. Matt., 12 : 46.

6. Mark, 3 : 31.

occasion is also germane to the present subject. Jesus was preaching in a synagogue on the Sabbath day and many were astonished and said:

Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, Jose, and of Juda and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? And *they were offended at him*. But Jesus said unto them: A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among *his own kin, and in his own house*.¹

The words *among his own kin* have been singularly omitted by Matthew² and Luke.³ Why? The answer is too obvious to be mentioned. Jesus never boasted of his Divine origin, but rather claimed inspiration from God.⁴ The view that Jesus first received the Holy Spirit at the time of his baptism⁵ and that up to that time Jesus had not yet been glorified⁶ could never have arisen if the theory of virgin birth had been in existence from the first. He himself claimed to be like unto Moses, and asserted that he was a son of Abraham.⁷ He was styled as a mere *man*,⁸ and he spoke of himself as such.⁹ He was spoken of by others as the *son of Man*, and he also described himself as such—thirty times in Matthew, fourteen times in Mark, twenty-four times in Luke and twelve times in John. He is described as such in the Acts and the Revelation. Never did he speak of himself as the son of God except in two passages, which I have already discussed.

As to the meaning or significance of the phrase, the *Son of Man*, we must turn again to the Old Testament. In the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel we find that the term *Son of Man, Ben Adam*, is the standing phrase by which the Prophet describes himself.¹⁰ This was no doubt in Hebrew, but Aramaic was only one of its dialects. Again every descendant of Adam is spoken of as *son of man*.¹¹ It is impossible to imagine that the Jews, who were extremely devoted to the Old Testament, would have forgotten so frequent a use of this phrase. Whatever degradation the phrase may have suffered in common speech, the Biblical use must at any time have been capable of being revived as a mode of address of *a man*. Rev. William Sanday says that “to the Jews and to Jesus, who was a Jew, this phrase as a whole meant no more than a simple man.”¹²

I have discussed this phrase to show that Jesus would not have referred to himself as *son of Man* if he did not mean to convey that he was just a man himself, a man with all the implications of a human being, including male participation in his conception.

I will now go into further details to show how the New Testament teems with references against the virgin birth theory. Mary is described as the *espoused wife* of Joseph;¹³ and again by the simple description of *wife*.¹⁴ Joseph is referred to as the

1. Mark, 6 : 3-4.

2. Matt., 13 : 57.

3. Luke, 4 : 24.

4. John, 7 : 28.

5. Matt., 3 : 15-16; Mark, 1 : 10-11.

6. John, 7 : 39.

7. Luke, 19 : 9.

8. Matt., 8 : 27; Mark, 2 : 7, 6 : 2;

John, 1 : 30, 7 : 27-28, 46; Acts, 2 : 22.

9. Mark, 13 : 34; John, 3 : 13, 8 : 40.

10. Eze., 2 : 1, 3; 3 : 1, 3, 4, etc.

11. Job, 25 : 6; Ps., 144 : 3, 146 : 3; Isa., 51 : 12, 56 : 2.

12. Sanday : *The Life of Christ*, 213.

13. Matt., 1 : 18; Luke, 1 : 27, 2 : 25.

14. Matt., 1 : 20, 24.

husband of Mary.¹ Not only does Mary herself describe Joseph as the father of Jesus,² but Joseph is referred to as the father of Jesus in many places³ and, further, both Mary and Joseph are mentioned as the parents of Jesus,⁴ a description which could not have been used in any other sense but to convey the natural conception of Jesus. The naive efforts of the redactors to disguise the paternity of Jesus by forgeries have no limit. To mention a few: In Matthew the words “*the carpenter’s son*” were substituted for Joseph.⁵ In Luke the words *His father* preceding *Joseph* were omitted⁶ and in another place the words *Joseph and Mary* were omitted and the words *his parents* were substituted,⁷ while the words *his parents* appearing before *Joseph and Mary* were also omitted.⁸ The oldest six codices have, in Vs. 41 of Ch. 2, the words *Joseph et Maria* after *his parents*, and these also were omitted.⁹

It is for Christian apologists to explain why these forgeries were made.

The fact that Jesus was acknowledged as the son of Joseph, in the physical sense, cannot be denied. This fact was not infrequently alluded to contemptuously and by way of reproach in his presence. I am, of course, referring to descriptions of Jesus as the *son of a carpenter*.¹⁰ Not once did Jesus repudiate it or assert his immaculate conception. I have already quoted two passages from John¹¹ in which reference was made to Joseph as the father of Jesus. It is obvious that these statements were made, in the presence of Jesus, manifestly in the real sense of paternity and nowhere is this represented to be erroneous. The entire narratives exhibited the Apostles as having a right belief on the point.

Throughout the New Testament the claim of Jesus to be the Messiah is based on his descent from David.¹² This descent can only be attributed to Jesus if he was born according to natural law, for he is styled to be *of the seed of David* and had to be the fruit of the loins of David according to the flesh.¹³ And we find that Luke, appreciating the importance of this fact, says that Joseph was “of the house and lineage of David.”¹⁴ Dummelow also realizes this difficulty and says:

The accuracy or inaccuracy of the genealogies does not affect the main point at issue, our Lord’s descent, *through his legal father Joseph*, from David. Joseph’s family certainly claimed descent of David.¹⁵

In these circumstances, the term *seed of David* requires some explanation. It has been furnished by Trypho, the Jew of Justin Martyr. He says:

1. Matt., 1 : 16, 19.

2. Luke, 2 : 48.

3. Luke, 2 : 33, 48, 4 : 22 : John, 1 : 45, 6 : 42.

4. Luke, 2 : 27, 41, 43.

5. See R. V., p. 1074.

6. Luke, 2 : 33, R.V., p. 1128.

7. Luke, 2 : 27.

8. Luke, 2 : 43.

9. Luke, 2 : 41.

10. Matt., 13 : 55; Luke, 4 : 22; Mark, 6 : 3.

11. John, 1 : 45, 6 : 42.

12. Matt., 12 : 23, 15 : 22, 20 : 30-31, 21 : 7, 15; Mark, 10 : 47-48, 11 : 10; Luke, 1 : 69, 18 : 38-39; John, 7 : 42; Acts, 2 : 29-30, 13 : 23; 2 Tim., 2 : 8; Heb., 7 : 14, Rev., 5 : 5, 22 : 16.

13. Acts, 2 : 30.

14. Luke, 2 : 4.

15. Dummelow, *Comm. on the Holy Bible*, 622. (Italics are mine.)

For we all await the Christ, who will be *a man* among men . . . the Messiah will be descended from the *seed of David*, he will not be born of a virgin, for it was God's promise to the ancient King that he who is to come, would issue from *his seed*. Are we to think that God was merely mocking him?¹

Trypho, of course, was using the term in the literal sense and was adopting it as an argument against the virgin birth theory.

I will now deal with the versions as given in Matthew and Luke. The circumstances attending the announcement of the birth of Jesus as given in Matthew and Luke do not correspond. They differ in the following aspects:

MATTHEW

1. The Angel who appeared is not named.
2. The Angel appears to Joseph.
3. The apparition is in a dream.
4. The announcement is after conception.
5. The apparition is meant to dispel the doubts of Joseph which he is alleged to have had against the character of Mary.

LUKE

1. Luke gives the Angel's name as Gabriel.
2. The Angel appears to Mary.
3. The apparition is while Mary is awake.
4. The announcement is before conception.
5. The announcement is by way of glorification.

In view of these divergencies in the two narratives two questions arise: first, did they record one and the same occurrence?; and, secondly, if they were two separate occurrences, was the latter an amplification of the other?

The differences are so great and in so essential details—even the times are different—that they cannot relate to one and the same occurrence. Paulus has tried to blend the two.¹ According to him the angel first appeared to Mary and informed her of her approaching pregnancy.² She then went to Elisabeth,³ and on her return her condition was discovered by Joseph. He was then visited by the angel.⁴ But the two accounts cannot be so easily reconciled, because the narrative of Matthew excludes that of Luke. The angel in Matthew speaks as if his was the first communication. The message previously received by Mary is not repeated to Joseph and he is not reproached for disbelieving it. The giving of the name of the forthcoming child, and the reason for his being so called,⁵ smacks of an imaginative vision for which there was no justification and which was wholly superfluous because a similar communication had already been made to Mary.⁶

1. Paulus, *Comm. on Matt.*, 56.

2. Luke, 1 : 28-32.

3. Luke, 1 : 39-41.

4. Matt., 1 : 20.

The expression used in Matthew¹ lends itself to an inference that Joseph discovered Mary's condition independently of any communication by her. Is it unreasonable or unnatural to expect that the first impulse of Mary, after the apparition, would have been to rush to her husband and to communicate to him the significance of the Divine message and thus avoid the humiliation of being made the subject of suspicion? Realizing this difficulty the Church apologists have put forward various theories. Firstly, that owing to her excited state of mind she forgot all about the communication, and subsequently she herself became ignorant of the true cause of her pregnancy; and she recalled it with tears in her eyes when questioned about it. This attempt to explain Mary's silence is incomprehensible, but Olshausen replies with his favourite remark that the measures of ordinary occurrences of the world should not be applied to the supernatural. I will let Hess answer him. He retorts that it is because of the supernatural that human mistakes should not have occurred, and he, therefore, rejects this explanation. The silence of Mary has also been attributed to her modest reluctance to cause a situation so liable to be misunderstood. This is ridiculous, because Mary was fully convinced of the Divine agency in the matter and had actually comprehended her mission² and could never have been tongue-tied by petty considerations of false shame. Another explanation put forward for Mary's silence is that Joseph was at a distance from his abode where Mary lived and did not return till after the pregnancy. But this story is based on the assumption that Joseph lived at Bethlehem-Judah, a considerable distance from Nazareth where Mary lived. This explanation is false; because Joseph lived at the village of Bethlehem in Galilee at a distance of seven miles from Nazareth. In any case, there is no justification for suggesting any such journey or that they lived apart, except to base a false argument on it. Again, it has been suggested that Mary did not open her heart to Joseph before the pregnancy because she wished first to consult her cousin Elisabeth as to the mode of making the disclosure to Joseph, and consequently she went to her and remained away for three months. But this explanation has equally no justification because, according to Luke, when Mary did meet her cousin, she did not mention Joseph at all to her.³

In view of these considerations one is forced to the conclusion that Matthew introduced the apparition to Joseph merely to meet the objection of the Ebionites as to why Joseph did not object if he was not the real father of Jesus, or act in a manner becoming any other man, if virgin birth was a fact. Matthew supplied the explanation, even if the scepticism and mistrust of Joseph of his wedded wife became incompatible with the character given to him by Matthew of being a *just man*.⁴ But such considerations never weighed with Matthew, who was out to insert everything in his Gospel so long as it fulfilled a prophecy or had a parallel in the Old Testament. In this matter he merely borrowed the facts from the father of Moses, who was comforted under similar circumstances when he was anxious concerning the pregnancy of his wife, though for a different reason.

The two versions, therefore, can be neither parallel nor inter-connected. The angel could have appeared either to one or the other, and consequently only one of the two

5. Matt., 1 : 21.

6. Luke, 1 : 31.

1. Matt., 1 : 18.

2. Luke, 1 : 38, 46-56.

narratives can be considered. Joseph, according to the Gospels never came in contact with any of the disciples of Jesus. He plays no part in the ministry of Jesus. How is it that his apparition is known at all and is recorded in the Gospel? On the other hand, it is natural that Mary, being the person chiefly concerned, ought to have been warned. For this reason also Luke's version must be preferred and that of Matthew rejected.

The version of Luke has peculiarly features of its own; and the conception of Jesus through the Holy Ghost, grounded as it is on a mere assertion, has to be positively tested by other materials detailed in the New Testament, the Apocryphal Gospels and other contemporary literature.

The angel who appeared to Mary only informed her, in the first instance, that she would become pregnant, without specifying after what manner, and that she would bring forth a child and call him Jesus, who would be great and would be *the son of the Highest*.¹ The term *the son of the Highest* can be taken only in the sense of the Old Testament:² an ordinary king of Israel, a *man*. The term *Son of God*³ was also used later by the angel. This is a spurious substitute for *shall be called Holy*.⁴ It was not till she recalled the fact of her virginity that the angel defined the nature of the conception by the Holy Ghost. As a confirmatory sign Mary was referred to her cousin Elisabeth, whereupon Mary resigned herself to the will of God.

Mary, we are told, then immediately set out and went to her cousin, a visit which was attended by extraordinary occurrences; for when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb for joy; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost,⁵ and in her exultation addressed Mary as the future mother of the Messiah,⁶ to which Mary responded with a hymn of praise.⁷

It is this hymn of Mary which really shows the falsity of the statement, as it is so interlarded with the songs of praise spoken by the mother of Samuel in analogous circumstances.⁸ These passages portray events not as they actually happened but as the redactor wished them to happen. Here, again, old history was repeating itself. The mutual relations of Esau and Jacob had been prefigured by their struggles and positions in their mother's womb.⁹ And the six months are introduced with the set purpose of taking advantage of circumstances which the redactor desired to contrive. The quickening has to take place, and the visit of the angel is withheld till after the longest possible period required for such an event.

From the narratives of Matthew¹⁰ and Luke¹¹ it is clear that the conception of Jesus was to be by the Holy Ghost. But it is somewhat surprising to find that the very two

3. Luke, 1 : 46-56.

4. Matt., 1 : 19.

1. Luke, 1 : 32.

2. 2 Sam., 7 : 14; Ps., 2 : 7.

3. Luke, 1 : 35.

4. See Revised Version, P. 1125.

5. Luke, 1 : 41.

6. Luke, 1 : 43.

7. Luke, 1 : 46-55.

8. Compare Luke, 1 : 47, 49, 51 and 53 with Ps., 2 : 1-5, 8, and Luke, 1 : 48 with I Sam., 1 : 11; and Luke, 1 : 50 with Deut., 7 : 9 and Luke 1 : 52 with Eccl., 10 : 14 and also Luke 1 : 54 with Ps., 97 : 3.

9. Gen., 25 : 22.

10. Matt., 1 : 18.

Gospels which relate the miracle of the virgin birth, are the ones which claim the descent of Jesus as given in their genealogies. These genealogies, in spite of their defects and discrepancies, would never have been prepared if the relationship between Joseph and Jesus had not existed and been admitted at the time of their compilation. The authors or the copyists or the redactors must have become somewhat disturbed by the very obvious contradictions in the conclusions of these genealogies on the one hand and the theory of the virgin birth on the other, which was definitely to annul the paternity of Joseph. Notwithstanding their own convictions as portrayed in the genealogies, they, therefore, made abortive attempts to establish the Divine origin of Jesus. In Matthew the word *begat* appeared thirty-eight times and in Luke the word *son* appeared seventy-six times. It must have been realized that not one of the ancestors mentioned in the two genealogies was born of a virgin, and, therefore, the words *begat* and *son* would have to have the same significance and meaning, a natural birth, with regard to Jesus, unless of course some addition or alteration was made to import the virgin birth. In Matthew the phrase originally was:

And Jacob begat Joseph, and Joseph begat Jesus of Mary.

If we read this verse in the light of verses 1—6, where children of four women, viz., Tamar, Rachab, Ruth, and the wife of Urias, are mentioned, we find that in each case the description is identical. Thus we are told:

Judas begat Phares and Zara of Tamar¹ . . . Salmon begat Booz of Rachab, and Booz begat Obed of Ruth² . . . and David the King begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias,³ . . . and Jacob begat Joseph and Joseph begat Jesus of Mary.⁴

Thus the same phraseology is used and the same meaning must be given. In none of these cases did the author, in the first instance, imply an immaculate conception.

Our certainty on this is confirmed by a text of Epiphanius which informs us that the early Christians, such as Corinthus and Carpocrates, used a Gospel of Matthew in which the genealogy was made the basis of the claim that Jesus was in reality the son of Joseph and Mary.⁵ Eusebius attributes the same opinion, and the same defence of it, to the Ebionite Symonachus.⁶ Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, two of the most ancient ecclesiastical writers, agree that the Ebionites, the early Jewish Christians, held this belief at the earliest period known to Christian history.⁷ Clement condemned them for recognising Jesus only as the son of Joseph, through whom he is traced genealogically to David, and not as the son of God.⁸

But the simple phrase: *and Jacob begat Joseph and Joseph begat Jesus of Mary* was soon changed into:

And Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

11. Luke, 1 : 34.

1. Matt., 1 : 3.

2. Matt., 1 : 5.

5. *Haer.*, 30 : 14.

6. Eusebius, *H.E.* 7 : 17.

Discussing this change in this verse Rev. C. J. Scofield in his *Reference to the New Testament* had to admit:

The changed expression was introduced to convey that Jesus was not begotten of natural conception.¹

One of the copyists made another alteration. He changed the phrase to:

And Jacob begat Joseph, and Joseph, to whom was married the *virgin Mary*, begat Jesus.²

This introduction of the word *virgin* clearly, but rather awkwardly, exhibited the object for which the alteration was made; and the Church was compelled to disown it.

In the case of Luke we are less fortunate as the manuscripts do not permit us to trace the matter which has been altered. But that it has been changed is self-evident and sufficiently proved by the reading of the relevant verse:

And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (*as was supposed*) the son of Joseph³

The words *as was supposed* are in brackets, and betray an addition, as Loisy justly observes: “to abrogate the idea of natural sonship which the text of this passage originally suggested.”

Both Matthew⁴ and Luke⁵ speak of Mary as the *espoused wife* of Joseph. I do not wish to enter into a controversy but will only mention that modern critics have proved that this translation of the Greek text is incorrect and that it should be *wedded wife*.⁶ The *Syriac Sinaiticus* uses the word *his wife*.⁷ “The word *espousage* according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* means the condition of “being married, wedlock,” and *espousal* means “the celebration of marriage nuptials or wedding.” The compilers of this Dictionary make a significant observation and say:

It seems probable that the sense “marriage” was the original one in English, and the sense *betrothal* arose at a later stage through the influence of the Canonical law.

The translators of the Authorized Version must have used the word *espoused wife* to indicate *wedded wife*, as opposed to a concubine, for there is no such thing as “betrothed wife.” Webster in his Dictionary makes the interpretation still more clear. He explains *betroth* as: promise to take (as a future *espouse*) in marriage; and *espouse* as uniting in marriage, to wed. The same meanings are given in Skeat’s Etymological Dictionary of the English Language. In this connection I would like to quote a passage from Hastings’ *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*.

3. Matt., 1 : 6.

7. Justin, *Dial cum Trypho*, 48.

4. Matt., 1 : 16. (The interpolation in the verse is omitted.)

8. Clement, *Homil*, 18 : 13.

1. Scofield, *The New Testament and Psalms*, 2.

2. Conybear, *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila*, 16.

See also Peake’s *Commentary on the Bible*, 701.

3. Luke, 3 : 23.

4. Matt., 1 : 18.

5. Luke, 2 : 5. How could Joseph have taken

That the virgin is still spoken of as “espoused” in Luke 2 : 5 is not to be taken necessarily an indication that the marriage had not taken place. Had she not been Joseph’s wife, the Jewish custom would have forbidden her making the journey along with him.¹

And to this, may I add, as mentioned by Matthew, living in the house of Joseph.² This certainly would have been an impossibility if Mary had been only betrothed to Joseph.

In Matthew the theory of virgin birth is based on the following passage, wherein we are told that after rising from his sleep Joseph took unto him his wife.

And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus.³

The *Syriac Sinaiticus* makes the position perfectly clear for in place of this lengthy statement it has a simple one:

And she bore to him a son and he called his name Jesus.⁴

Thus the birth of the son connects itself directly with the words of the preceding verse. To make the sense absolutely clear, I will quote the two verses together:

Then Joseph arose from his sleep . . . and took unto him his wife, and she bore to him a son and he called his name Jesus.⁵

No comments are necessary. The text speaks for itself and exposes the clever forgery of the early Christians.

In the case of Luke, I am able to advance the matter still further. The first two chapters of Luke bear definite testimony against the virgin birth theory. Were virgin birth to be presupposed, it would indeed be a very singular thing. I have already mentioned how the parents of Jesus “marvelled at those things which were spoken of” Jesus by Simon⁶ and by the Shepherds⁷ and also were unable to understand his words as a boy of twelve.⁸

We are also told that Jesus was born after Mary’s “days were accomplished”⁹ just like John the Baptist was born after the “full time” of Elisabeth.¹⁰ How is it that in case of a supernatural birth all the laws relating to a natural birth had to be complied with?

But this is not all. We are further told:

And when the days of *their* purification according to the Law of Moses were accomplished, *they* brought him to Jerusalem to present him to the Temple.¹¹

Mary to be taxed as his wife, if he had not actually married her?

6. Rev. Dr. Leighton, *A Faith to Affirm*, 312.

7. Peake, *Commentary on the Bible*, 726.

1. Hastings’ *Dict. of Christ and the Gospels*, 141.

2. Matt., 1 : 24.

3. Matt., 1 : 25.

4. See *Ency. Biblica*, Col. 2961.

5. Matt., 1 : 24-25.

6. Luke, 2 : 33.

7. Luke, 2 : 18.

8. Luke, 2 : 50.

The redactors have substituted the word *her* in place of *their* and it so appears in the Authorised Version,¹² no doubt to remove the original error, because it was only the mother who was supposed to be unclean.¹ But the error, if an error it be, serves to show that at least the evangelist regarded Joseph as the real father of Jesus; they could not have thought of him as unclean, if Jesus had been born of a virgin. To meet this objection, it has been suggested that the word *their* related to Mary and Jesus. But Jesus was “the Holy of the Holies,” and in any case under the law as laid down in the Third Book of Moses, Leviticus, a newly-born child never became unclean. Further, if the birth had been brought about by supernatural means, no occasion to stress any uncleanness on Mary’s part could have arisen. This incident shows that the progress of the child in its mother’s womb must have been in accordance with the laws of nature: the very idea of purification suggests it.

The whole of Luke, therefore, not only knows nothing of the virgin birth but rests upon natural birth. As in Matthew, the entire theory is based on two verses in Luke which, as I will now show, are also forgeries. They read:

Then said Mary unto the Angel, How shall this be, seeing *I know* not a man?
And the Angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost *shall* come upon thee, and the Power of the Highest *shall* overshadow thee; therefore, also that holy thing which *shall* be born of thee *shall* be called the *Son of God*.²

In verse 34, *know* is in the present tense and Mary does not speak of the future, while the angel is using the future tense all the while. It may also be stated, and Dummelow agrees,³ that Mary takes the words of the angel as fulfilment in the ordinary way of nature. The reply of the Angel (verse 35) is only to express with great clearness what he has already said in verses 30—33, which admit without any difficulty of being understood—as Mary in fact so understood them—as referring to the birth of the Messiah from a human marriage. Peake, while commenting on these verses, says:

Many scholars regard these verses as an interpolation The idea of verse 35 and its terminology are not Hebraic; “Spirit” in Hebrew is feminine. But it is possible to take “overshadow” in its primary Greek sense of hide and conceal. Pregnant women were regarded as peculiarly liable to the assault of evil spirits (cf. Rev., 12 : 1—6). We may thus have here the idea of Satan lying in wait for the future Messiah (cf. Rev., 12 : 1—5); to avoid any molestation the Power of the Highest will conceal the mother till the danger is past. Or it may be that *the child, while conceived in the usual way*, was to receive a special pre-natal sanctity like John.⁴

Again, if we proceed further, the narrative makes the Holy Ghost descend only twice. The first time the object was:

9. Luke, 2 : 6.

10. Luke, 1 : 57.

11. Luke, 2 : 22.

12. Revised Version, p. 1127.

1. Lev., 12 : 4.

3. Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*,

And it came to pass that when Elisabeth heard salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb, and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.¹

Elizabeth, it is noteworthy, is filled with the Holy Ghost and not Mary. For the second visit of the Holy Ghost, we have to skip over to the third chapter:

Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.²

The birth of Jesus took place betwixt these two visits. On these facts alone Luke can be said to give a direct lie to the virgin birth theory.

But as already stated, the virgin birth theory is based on verses 34-35. And Weiss says they are forgeries,³ a conclusion with which many authorities agree. The Revised Version shows the alteration⁴ and Hastings says:

Removal of verses 34-35, which contain the only reference to virgin birth, as interpolations, is justified.⁵

Realizing the position that the relevant verses regarding the virgin birth in both Matthew and Luke are forgeries, the compilers of the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* were compelled to come to the only possible conclusion that:

The virgin birth disappears from the source altogether.⁶

I need not carry the matter any further.

739.
 2. Luke, 1 : 34-35.
 4. Peake, *Comm. on the Bible*, 726. (Italics are mine.)

1. Luke, 1 : 41.
 2. Luke, 3 : 21-22.
 3. Weiss, *Die Predigt Jesu Von Reiche Gottes*, 342.

CHAPTER 7

THE FAMILY OF IMRAN

There is nothing surprising in the fact that the Gospels leave us in ignorance concerning the parents of Jesus and his earthly life. The early Christians must have possessed more accurate information about them; but there were very strong reasons for not transmitting them to the second generation of Christians. Almost immediately after the crucifixion was begun that labour of faith which resolved to elevate Jesus more and more above humanity, which must necessarily have condemned everything that tended in the opposite direction. Too many details about the earthly family of Jesus, and its actual status, which was certainly not too distinguished, could not fail at that time to be very embarrassing. When Paul announced that he was interested only in the crucified and glorified Christ,¹ he gave the exact formula for the transformation of the life of Jesus in the minds of the earliest generation of Christians. At the same time he revealed the secret of the rapidity with which authentic recollections concerning the family of Jesus, and his life prior to baptism, were obliterated.

The earliest tradition believed that the name of Jesus' mother was Maryam (Mari) and the name of his father was Joseph.² I am alive to the fact that, soon after, Christian apologists challenged the correctness of Joseph being father of Jesus.

Joseph was a carpenter. Jesus learnt his father's trade.³ He, therefore, came from the ranks of the simple classes, from among those who laboured and "*ate bread in the sweat of their faces.*"⁴ He experienced their troubles and poverty, as well as their hatred of the rich.⁵

We know very little regarding Mary, and what the Gospels say about her is totally insufficient. In view of the fact that the doctrine of *Christotokos* centered round Mary, their silence about her is all the more remarkable. Her lineage is completely unknown except that she was a cousin of Elisabeth, the wife of Zacharias, and was "of the daughters of Aaron"⁶ *i.e.*, Amran or *Imran*. Thus we gather that Mary also belonged to the family of *Imran* or, in other words, was a descendant of *Imran*.

The Apocryphal Gospels, however, furnish us with some material with which we can reconstruct the early life of Jesus, but unfortunately they also contain and end in contradictory fantasies; and, with the growing influence of the Pauline creed, succumbed gradually to the glorification of the Lord; and, therefore, have to be considered very carefully.

The narrative I am about to describe has been collected from various sources. I will here, very briefly, discuss them first.

1. I Cor., 1 : 18, 23-24; 2 : 2.

2. *Ency. Brit.*, Art. *Genealogies of Jesus*.

3. *Gospel of Thomas*, C. 3.

4. Gen., 3 : 19.

5. Matt., 19 : 23-24

6. Luke, 1 : 5.

The *Protevangelium Jacobi* or the *Gospel Relating to the Birth and Infancy of Jesus*, as known to us, was discovered in the sixteenth century by Postel during his travels in the Middle East. It is also styled as the *Gospel of James*. Zahn and Kruger regard it as a very early document and place it in the first decade of the second century. Origen, writing in the early half of the third century, while referring to this Gospel said:

The author was in early times universally believed to be the Lord's brother, the head of the Church of Jerusalem.

Origen was, of course, referring to James the Just, for this Gospel begins: "I, James, wrote this history . . ." Clement of Alexandria¹ and Justin Martyr² not only referred to it but relied on it. There exist its recensions in Greek and Latin and an Armenian version is also in existence. It was read in several Churches up to the fifth century. I must, however, point out that this Gospel, as it has come down to us, is not in its original form. From time to time many additions and alterations had been made:

This happened, there is ground for believing, in the 5th century. The abrupt introduction of Joseph in the first person (Ch. 18-20) gives convincing evidence that that and the following sections are not from the hand of the writer of the Gospel.³

To begin with, Origen gives a different ending of the Gospel. Again, certain incidents have been introduced which are in keeping with the later popular mythical belief of the Christians, and it is for this reason that in its present form the Catholic Church, in particular, considers it to be "the most edifying Treatise which was read in several Churches."⁴ If the form of the Gospel as it existed before the fourth century had been the same as it is to-day it would not have been condemned, as it was, by three successive decrees: The Decrees of the Western Church at Damascus (382 C.E.), of Innocent I (405 C.E.) and of Gelasius (496 C.E.). On the contrary in its present form, and, no doubt, because of the incidents interpolated by hagiographers, this Gospel is maintained by the Catholic Church to be the "source of various traditions current among the faithful. They are of value in indicating the veneration paid to Mary at a very early stage."⁵

According to Postel, this Gospel was very popular with the Syrian Nestorians even in the sixteenth century.

The second is the *Evangelium de Nativitate de Maria* or the Gospel of the Nativity of Mary. In this Gospel the history of Mary is narrated and it ends with the birth of Jesus. The observations I have made about *Protevangelium Jacobi* equally apply, perhaps with greater force, to this Gospel.

The third, is the *Gospel of the Ebionites*. The Ebionites were Jewish Christians, and James the Just was the head of their Church at Jerusalem. They denounced Paul

1. *Stromatas*, 8 : 16-93.

2. *Dial.* 78, 1200; *Apol* : 33.

3. *Hastings' Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*,

Vol. I, p. 681.

4. *The Catholic Ency.*, Art. *Apocryphal Gospels*.

5. *Ibid.*

as a heretic and rejected all his Epistles as unauthoritative. No wonder that in the following centuries they themselves were stigmatized as heretics. They observed the Law themselves and held its observance as absolutely necessary for salvation and binding on all, and refused fellowship with all who did not comply with it. They believed that:

Jesus is the Messiah; yet a mere man, born by natural generation to Joseph and Mary.¹

This Gospel was likewise referred to by Irenaeus,² Epiphanius,³ Hippolytus,⁴ Origen⁵ and Tertullian.⁶ The Tübingen School held that primitive Christianity was itself Ebionism. Mosheim says that although the Ebionites believed in the celestial mission of Jesus, yet they regarded him as a man born of Joseph and Mary, according to the ordinary course of nature.⁷

And lastly, *the Gospel according to the Hebrews* is supposed to be the oldest Gospel. It was freely quoted by Ignatius in his *Epistle to the Church at Smyrna*.⁸ This Gospel was written in Aramaic, the language which Jesus and the Apostles spoke. Sometimes it is confused with the so-called *Gospel of the Nazarenes*; and while considering the one as being only another edition of the other, the Tübingen School held that the teachings and traditions contained therein represented the belief of the primitive Christians. Jerome, who held a very high opinion about this Gospel, regarded it as the original Gospel according to Matthew.

There are other Gospels: The *Gospel of Peter*; the *Gospel of Thomas*, the Gospel according to Judas Iscariot, and many others but I need not go into their details.

Having thus mentioned in some detail the sources of the narrative I proceed to describe it, of course, without any of the gloss of the later Christians.

Joachim (Ioachim) a wealthy farmer of Nazareth, and his wife Hanna (Anna) lamented over the fact that they had no children.⁹ Joachim was told to his chagrin by Reuben, a Jewish father who could boast of a numerous family, that his childlessness disqualified him from presenting his offerings to God. Reuben looked Joachim in the face contemptuously and addressed him as a man "who had not given any offspring to Israel." With an aggrieved heart Joachim went to the Temple, remained there till late at night and prayed to the Lord to bless him with a child. In the meantime Hanna, his wife, was also reminded of her childlessness as she saw, through a window of her house, a sparrow's nest in a laurel bush. She had also been driven with jeers from the Lord's Temple; and she also lamented:

1. Hippol. Phil., 7 : 22, See also Hastings' *History of Apostolic Church*, 318-332.

2. Adv. *Haer.*, 1, 26.

3. *Epil Haer.*, 29, 9; 4.

4. Hippol. *Haer.*, 10 : 18.

5. *Haer.*, 33.

6. Turt, *Icle, Haer.*, 3 : 12.

7. Mosheim, *an Ecclesiastical History: Ancient and Modern.*, Vol. 1, 214.

8. *Ibid.*, 3 : I.

9. *Prot. Jac.*, C. I.

Woe is me! Who begot me and what womb produced me, for I am reproached, and they have driven me with jeers from the Lord's Temple.

Woe is me! What am I like? I am not like the birds in Heaven, for the birds of Heaven are fruitful before Thee, O Lord.

Woe is me! What am I like? I am not like this earth, for even this earth bears its fruit in season and blesses Thee, O Lord.¹

By these lamentations Hanna profaned the Lord's Day. Judith her maid turned on her and said:

Why should I wish you any evil for not listening to my words, since the Lord Himself has closed thy womb, and not given thee any offspring for Israel?

Hanna dressed herself, out of respect for the Lord's Day, and, as her husband had not yet returned, she bewailed again:

Bewail must I my sorrows, And bewail must I my childlessness.

And Hanna prayed:

O God of Israel! bless me and harken unto my prayer, as Thou didst bless the womb of Sarah and gave her a son, even Isaac.²

At this time an angel appeared and assured her, just as he did to Joachim in the Temple, that the Lord would bless her with a child. Hanna answered with a promise:

As the Lord my God liveth, if I bring forth a child, I will bring it for a gift unto Thee, my God.³

Eventually, Mary was born to Hanna on the 15th of Hathor;⁴ and although according to the Jewish ideas she had to be sorrowful for the child was not a son, still she thankfully praised the Lord for His gift and sang a song. This song is more appropriate than is usually the case with such songs in the Bible. Hanna thanked the Lord and sang:

I will sing a song unto the Lord my God, for He hath visited me, and taken from me the reproach of my enemies;

The Lord hath given me fruit of righteousness, a single fruit, but manifold in His sight.

Who will tell the sons of Reuben— that Hanna giveth such.

Harken! Harken! Ye twelve tribes of Israel: Hanna giveth suck.⁵

Hanna then proceeded to fulfill her vows of consecrating the child. Mary was not allowed to walk on the common ground till she was taken at the age of three to the

1. Prot. Jac., 3 : 1.

2. *Ibid.*, 3 : 3.

3. *Ibid.*, 4 : 1.; *Evang. de Nat. de Mar.*, C.3.

4. Forbes Robinson, *The Coptic Apocryphal Gospel*, 1.

5. Prot. Jac., 4 : 3.

Synagogue, where she was entrusted to the high priest, Zacharias.¹

A good deal of discussion has taken place as to where Zacharias and John the Baptist lived. Luke says in a city in Juda, but he contradicts himself when he refers to a desert. He does not name the town and the only references by name to the places where John was living are given in John: Bethabara² and Aenon near Salim.³ Bethabara was east of the river and a day's distance from Cana of Galilee.

Zacharias belonged to the tribe of Abijah, and he may have been a descendant of those who were left behind by Zorobabel with the first band of exiles under the leadership of Shabbazzar. It is true that at one time Zacharias must have lived in the priestly towns, but the Talmud tells us of many high priests living away from them. Zacharias must have taken Elisabeth to these places to escape the fury of Herod.

Mary was taken to Zacharias and was placed under his guardianship. She began to live with him. During her stay in the Temple she was visited and fed by angels and honoured by Divine visions.⁴

Mary arrived at womanhood when she was twelve years old. She then had an angelic apparition.⁵ A slightly different version of this apparition is given by Luke.⁶

In three of the Gospels under discussion the visit of Mary to Elisabeth at this juncture is omitted, for the obvious reason that the apparition took place at a time when Mary was living with Zacharias and consequently with Elisabeth. In the fourth it is clearly a later and self-contradictory interpolation.

Mary had to leave the Temple because of her age. "No exception was made on her account to the rule which forbade all full grown women to be seen within the walls of the Holy Temple. The high priest took counsel as to what course they should adopt in order that she should not defile the Lord's Temple."⁷

And the high priest took the vestment with the twelve bells and went in unto the Holy of Holies and prayed concerning her. And lo, an angel of the Lord appeared saying unto him: Zacharias, Zacharias, go forth and assemble them that are bachelors of Israel, and let them bring every man a rod, and to whosoever the Lord shall show a sign, *his wife shall she be*.⁸

And Zacharias in conformity with the procedure of old⁹ summoned the bachelors of Israel¹⁰ who lived around or near the place. Zacharias proclaimed:

Let each bring his rod (some version say—a reed used for writing) and who-

1. *Prot. Jac.*, 7 : 1.

2. *John*, 1 : 28.

3. *Ibid.*, 3 : 23.

4. *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, 6 : *The Coptic Life of Mary*, 2A.

5. *Evang. de Nat. de Mar.*, C. 9.

6. *Luke* 1 : 28.

7. *The Gospel of Mary*. See Yrjo Hiren, *The Sacred Shirne*, 201.

8. *Prot. Jac.*, 8 : 3; *Evang. de Native. de Mar.* C. 7.

9. *Hos.*, 4 : 12, *Ezek.*, 21 : 21.

10. One of the versions says *widowers*.

ever has a sign shown to him by the Lord *his shall the woman be*.¹

The narrative goes on:

And Joseph cast down his adze and ran to meet the heralds, and when they were gathered together, they went to the high priest. The rods were thrown in the fountain outside the Temple . . . when Joseph's rod emerged a dove came down and sat beside it.²

Joseph was then married to Mary,³ and after some time took her unto his house (which was in Bethlehem Nasoriyyah).⁴ The marriage is consummated and Mary conceives.⁵ The age of Mary "when these mysteries came to pass" was fourteen years.⁶

Some Gospels state that immediately after his marriage Joseph left Mary and went to another place to attend to his work, and that the apparition to Mary took place during his absence. The place to which Joseph is alleged to have gone is not named and no one mentions the period of his absence. Such vague platitudes cannot be accepted to cover a period of four years. In any case there was nothing to prevent Joseph from returning earlier to his house, resuming his married life and then returning to his work. I have already given detailed reasons for rejecting this journey. In any case the apparition took place before the consummation of the marriage.

The *Protevangelium Jacobi* also narrates that some time after Mary had been received into Joseph's house, she, with other women, was charged with the making of the Dividing Veil for the Temple of the Lord to screen the Holy of Holies,⁷ and that it fell to her lot to spin the true purple and the scarlet. Mary "did not work with the other women but took the material with her to her home,"⁸ and Joseph had to take a vow of separation as provided for in the Old Testament.⁹ During the period of the vow he had to separate himself from all worldly things and particularly from any carnal connection with his wife. Dummelow tells us that "this vow could either be for a limited period or for life."¹⁰ He also says that after the expiry of the period of the vow the devotee "returned to ordinary life."¹¹ Joseph was made to take this vow to prevent "unclean-ness" of Mary while she was engaged in making the veil. This vow was meant for men only.¹² Mary had "secluded herself in her home to conceal her condition from the children of Israel. Mary went to the Temple to deliver her finished work."¹³

We are then suddenly told that when the authorities of the Temple discovered

1. *Prot. Jac.*, 9 : 1. *Evang. de Nat. de Mar.* C. 7-8; cf. *Nub.*, 18 : 2-5.

2. *Ibid.*

3. The details of the event are given in the Armenian Version, Ch. 4.

4. *Evang. de Nat. de Mar.*, C. 7-8.

5. *The Gospel of the Ebionites, The Gospel according to the Hebrews*, 4 : 3.

6. *Prot. Jac.*, 12 : 3; *The Gospel of Mary*. See also Yrjo Hiren, *The Sacred Shrine*, 206. Some versions say *twelve*, others *sixteen*.

7. *Prot. Jac.*, 13 : 1; cf. *Exod.*, 26 : 31.

8. *The Gospel of Mary*. See Yrjo Hiren, *The Sacred Shrine*, 206.

9. *Nub.* 6 : 1-20.

10. Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, 104.

11. *Ibid.*

12. 1 *Mac.*, 3 : 49; *Acts*, 18 : 18.

13. *The Gospel of Mary*. See Yrjo Hiren, *The Sacred Shrine*, 206.

Mary's condition, Joseph was charged with incontinence; and both of them¹ were questioned:

Wherefore hath thou done this, and wherefore hath thou humbled thy soul and forgotten the Lord thy God?

The narrative goes on:

And Joseph was full of weeping. And the priest said: I will give you to drink of the water of the conviction of the Lord, and it will make manifest your sins before your eyes. And the priest took thereof and made Joseph drink, and sent him to the hill country and he returned whole. He made Mary also drink and sent her into the hill country. And she returned whole. And all the people marvelled because sin appeared not in them.²

Joseph and Mary had not, in fact, transgressed any commandments of the Lord, they had only violated, if at all, a ritual set up by the authorities of the Temple and, therefore, as was to be expected, they passed the test scatheless.

Consequently, the high priest said to Joseph and Mary:

Since the Lord God has not disclosed your sins, neither do I condemn you.³

So the high priest sent them away,

And Joseph took Mary and departed unto his house rejoicing and glorifying the Lord of Israel.⁴

Mary was innocent and so, of course, was Joseph, because the conception had taken place during the interval which had elapsed between the time of marriage and the time when Mary was entrusted with the making of the veil and before Joseph had taken the vow. These facts are inherently implied, though not specifically stated, in the narrative because the discovery could not have been made by the authorities of the Temple till after the pregnancy was a little advanced. Consequently, the entrustment of the making of the veil could not have covered the same period. Besides, Mary at her marriage was twelve years of age, and at the time of the making of the veil when "these mysteries came to pass" she was over thirteen years of age.

In one of the narratives, it is true, it is recorded that Joseph had left Mary soon after the marriage and that on his return he was distressed to find her condition and charged her before the authorities of the Temple. She had, therefore, to go through the ordeal of drinking the bitter waters and was subsequently declared to be innocent. This version is false and was introduced to support the supernatural birth of Jesus. I repeat that this version is false, because Joseph also was made to go through the ordeal. The law did not provide for the man to go through the ordeal if he had charged his wife with adultery. If this version was correct Mary, and Mary alone, should have been

1. Nub., 5 : 6-7.

2. *Prot. Jac.*, 16 : 1-2. *cf.* Nub. 5 : 18.

3. *Prot. Jac.*, 16 : 3.

4. *Ibid.*

made to drink the bitter waters. The fact that Joseph also had to take the bitter waters is conclusive evidence of the fact that the real charge was against him, and Mary was made to drink the bitter waters merely because, in such circumstances, the Divine wrath could only demonstratively affect a woman. Mary, therefore, was made to do this so as to furnish evidence against Joseph and not because she had been charged with, or suspected of, adultery. Had the contrary been the case, *i.e.*, had Mary been charged with adultery, she alone would have been made to drink the bitter water and then¹ stoned to death.²

The narrative continues that, in keeping with the traditions then obtaining and, may I add, even to-day obtaining in the East, Mary went to her cousin's house to give birth to her first-born. She had to pass Nazareth on her way. Thus Jesus was born at Nazareth as any other child would have been in wedlock, and in support of this assertion it is mentioned that "the child took the breast from his mother."³

From this stage Mary is relegated to the position of a forlorn mother, though she now and again appears, according to the Gospels, in the story. Twelve years after she is made to accompany Joseph and Jesus to the Temple at Jerusalem and then she appears at the scene of Calvary.

The abridged review in which I have striven as far as possible to employ the original expressions of the narratives is based upon the oldest MSS and translations of the various Gospels.

The Canonical Gospels also tell us that there were other children of Joseph and Mary besides Jesus. But those who raised Jesus to godhead and who created belief in the virgin birth, could not tolerate the idea of Joseph having ever consummated his marriage with Mary. The peculiar view of incarnation having been linked with the contemporary view of the baseness of matter, led the Christians, who started the worship of the virgin mother, to discover, or invent, the probability that the *brothers* and *sisters* of Jesus referred to in the New Testament were either half-brothers and half-sisters, being children of Joseph from a previous marriage, or cousins only.⁴

I have used the words "the children of Joseph and Mary" because the Synoptics have no hesitation in giving Jesus brothers and sisters. In the Gospels they are referred to in the most natural way. We read:

And there came his mother and his brethren, and standing without, they sent unto him, to call him, and the multitude was sitting about him, and they said unto him: Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without, ask for thee.⁵

Again, people of Nazareth are represented as saying:

1. Nub., 5 : 24.

2. Lev., 20 : 10.

3. Gospel according to the Hebrews.

4. Lightfoot, *Brethren of the Lord*, 75.

5. Mark, 3 : 31-32.

Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses and Juda, and Simon? And are not his sisters also with us?¹

Paul is even more clear, when he says:

But others of the Apostles saw I none, save James, the Lord's brother.²

With this must be read the tradition that James the Just, a brother of Jesus, was the head of the Church at Jerusalem.³

I will not embark on any lengthy discussion of the arbitrary theories, based as they are on mere assertions. They are three-fold. The first, the *Helvidian* mentioned by Helvidius in the time of Jerome, which held that the brothers and sisters were the children of Joseph and Mary born after Jesus. They relied on the reference to Jesus as the first-born.⁴

The second, the *Epiphonian*, was sponsored by St. Epiphanius, which declared that the brothers and sisters were the issue of a previous marriage of Joseph. The third, the *Hieronymian*, was of St. Jerome himself, by which the brothers and sisters of Jesus were relegated to the status of mere cousins of the Lord, the children of Clopas, a brother of Joseph, and "the other Mary."

It was the last-mentioned theory which found favour with the later Christians, though it is totally devoid of any historical foundation. While commenting on this last theory Glover says:

That cousins in some parts of the world are confused in common speech with brothers may be admitted, but to the ordinary Greek reader *brothers* meant *brothers* and not cousins, which was something different.⁵

But we need not go by conjectures. We know the names of the brothers of Jesus⁶ and also the sons of "the other Mary;"⁷ and they are different.

As a last resort, it has been suggested that the "brothers and sisters" of Jesus were no other than the groups of his followers united to each other by the bonds of faith; and reliance is placed on the fact that early Christians spoke of themselves as brethren and that Jesus styled them as brethren in his direction to them to proceed to Galilee.⁸

I have already referred to the incident that the mother and brothers of Jesus went to get hold of him. He was then with his disciples and they mentioned to Jesus that his mother and brothers had come. This, I think, fully disposes of this special plea.

No one can ever dream the episode of the critical neighbours of Nazareth, who would not accept a prophet because they knew the family, that although Jesus had no

1. Mark, 6 : 3. See also Matt., 12 : 46-47; Luke, 8 : 19; John, 2 : 12; 7 : 3; Acts, 1 : 14.

2. Gal., 1 : 19.

3. Euseb., H.E. 2 : 1, 6.

4. Matt., 1 : 25; Luke, 2 : 7.

5. Glover, *The Jesus of History*, 23.

6. Matt., 13 : 55; Mark, 6 : 3.

7. Mark, 15 : 40.

8. Matt., 28 : 10; cf. John, 20 : 17.

blood brothers, yet their rejection was based because of his half-brothers or cousins only. When history gives us brothers and sisters and the apologetics cousins only, in any other case the decision of an historian would be quite clear.

I will just mention here another fact: Jesus had a twin brother, Judas Thomas¹ who is also called Didymus² *the twin*.

It is not a matter for wonder that the evangelic texts or common-sense traditions could not prevail for any length of time. The explanation is very simple. The early Christians, very shortly after the crucifixion, could not reconcile themselves to the idea that the mother of Jesus, once her mission had been accomplished, was relegated to the level of an ordinary woman. The doctrine of the virginity of the *Christotokos*, that is to say, *the mother of Christ*, was gradually replaced by the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary, and finally Joseph himself was made a saint. It was the asceticism of the fourth and fifth centuries which finally established the beliefs, which subsequently became one of the Articles of Faith, concerning the perfect and perpetual virginity of Mary.

But the fact remains that the first Christians in the first century and some, like the Ebionites, for a much longer period, continued to believe that Jesus was the *first born* of Joseph and Mary. They at that time were not interested in Mary on her own account, and it was a matter of indifference to them that she continued to live as Joseph's wife and gave birth to other children.

In conclusion, I can but observe that Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary and belonged to a humble family which consisted of half a dozen or more children besides himself.

1. Thilo, *Acta Thomae*, 94.

2. John, 20 : 24.