

the benignity of his infinite heart, is crying after us to be wise: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Our first and immediate duty to our great moral governor, is to listen to those accents of mercy, and comply. Tenderly invited, we must come with the whole heart, and receive the waters of life freely.

And having received this living water ourselves, we must do all in our power to impart it to others. The views which the scriptures give us of the sovereignty of God, will be no hinderance to us in this mighty work. Who was ever a more firm believer in the sovereignty of God than the apostle Paul? And yet who ever burned with a more ardent desire, or labored with a more untiring fidelity, for the salvation of souls? Happy the gospel minister, happy the private Christian, who takes the same view of the divine character with the apostle Paul, and forms his own character after the same model.

ARTICLE VIII.

THE BRETHERN OF CHRIST.

BY PHILIP SCHAFF, D.D., NEW YORK.

ON the question of the brethren or brothers¹ of our Saviour, three different opinions have been entertained and are still current among commentators: 1) They were only cousins of Jesus, sons of either a sister of Mary or a brother of Joseph; 2) They were younger children of Joseph and Mary, or uterine brothers of Jesus; 3) They were children of Joseph by a former marriage, and hence step-brothers of

¹ In our English Version of the Bible the word "brothers" never occurs, but always "brethren" instead. But in modern English the former is used for natural, the latter for moral or spiritual relationship. See the Dictionaries.

Jesus. The whole Latin church has long settled down upon the first view as the only one consistent with her theory of the higher merit of celibacy, and the dignity both of Christ himself and of his parents. The older Protestant divines acquiesced in the Roman Catholic view, and paid very little attention to the whole subject. But modern Protestant commentators have submitted the subject to a new and more thorough exegetical and critical investigation. For a time it seemed as if the second view had come to prevail, while the third was hardly considered worthy of serious attention. Quite recently, however, Dr. Lange, on several occasions,¹ has zealously opposed the second, and ingeniously defended the first theory, and put it on more plausible ground.

The question, as every other that relates to the personal history of our Saviour, is certainly one of interest, and not of mere idle curiosity, although it can hardly be said to have much doctrinal importance at the present stage of the controversy. This would only be the case if it could be clearly established on exegetical and historical evidence, that the brothers of Jesus were his *uterine* brothers, or younger children of *Mary*. Such a result would overthrow, at once, the dogma of her perpetual virginity, and undermine the very foundation of Roman Catholic asceticism and Mariolatry.

After a renewed investigation of the subject, to which we devoted some attention more than twenty years ago,² we are substantially confirmed in our former view, and beg leave to protest against Dr. Lange's views, and to dissent from the cousin-hypothesis, even with the new and plausible modification it has received from him. We shall confine ourselves to present, as clearly and precisely as we can, the

¹ In his Article *Jakobus*, in Herzog's Real-Encyclopadie, in his Commentary on Matthew, especially ch. xiii. 55-57 (p. 103 seq. of the 3d edition), and in his Introduction to his Commentary on the Epistle of James, 1862.

² Compare the author's book on "James the Brother of the Lord" (Berlin: 1842), where the whole subject is discussed exegetically and historically, with special reference to James of Jerusalem, his relation to James of Alphaeus; also *History of the Apostolic Church*, p. 378.

chief exegetical data, on which the proper conclusion must be based.

1. The *brothers* of Jesus, four in number, and bearing the names of Jacob or James, Joseph (or Joses), Simon, and Jude, are mentioned with or without their names fourteen or fifteen times in the New Testament (not *ten* times, as Alford *in loc.* says), twice in connection with *sisters* (whose number and names are not recorded), viz. twelve times in the Gospels, Matt. xii. 46, 47; xiii. 55, 56 (*ἀδελφοί* and *ἀδελφαί*); Mark iii. 31, 32; vi. 3 (here the *sisters* are likewise introduced); Luke viii. 19, 20; John vii. 3, 5, 10; once in the Acts (i. 14); and once by Paul, 1 Cor. ix. 5, to which must be added Gal. i. 19, where James of Jerusalem is called "the brother of the Lord." Besides, the Saviour himself speaks several times of his brothers (brethren), but apparently in a wider sense of the term, Matt. xii. 48–50; Mark iii. 33–35; Matt. xxviii. 10; John xx. 17.

In the former fourteen or fifteen passages it is agreed on all hands that the term *brothers* must be taken more or less literally of natural affinity, and not metaphorically or spiritually, in which sense all Christians are brethren. The question is only, whether the term means brothers proper, or cousins, according to a somewhat wider usage of the Hebrew *אָח*.

2. The exegetical or grammatical (though not perhaps the dogmatical) *a priori* presumption is undoubtedly in favor of the usual meaning of the word, the more so since no parallel case of a wider meaning of *ἀδελφός* (except the well known and always apparent metaphorical one, which is out of the question in our case) can be quoted from the New Testament. Even the Hebrew *אָח* is used only twice in a wider sense, and then only extended to *nephew* (not to *cousin*), viz. Gen. xiii. 8; xiv. 16, of Abraham and Lot, who was his brother's son (xl. 27, 31), and Gen. xxix. 12, 15, of Laban and Jacob his nephew and sister's son (comp. vs. 13). Here there can be no mistake. The cases are therefore not strictly parallel.

3. There is no mention anywhere of *cousins* or *kinsmen* of Jesus according to the flesh; and yet the term *ἀνεψιός*, *consobrinus*, *cousin*, is well known to the New Testament vocabulary (compare Col. iv. 10, where Mark is called a cousin of Barnabás); so also the more exact term *υἱὸς τῆς ἀδελφῆς*, *sister's son* (comp. Acts xxiii. 26, of Paul's cousin in Jerusalem); and the more general term *συγγενής*, *kinsman*, *relative*, occurs not less than eleven times (Mark vi. 4; Luke i. 36, 58; ii. 44; xiv. 12; xxi. 16; John xviii. 26; Acts x. 24; Rom. ix. 3; xvi. 7, 11, 21).

Now if the *brothers of Jesus* were merely his cousins (either sons of a sister of Mary, as is generally assumed, or of a brother of Joseph, as Dr. Lange maintains), the question may well be asked: Why, we may rationally ask, did the sacred historians never call them by their right name, *ἀνεψιοί*, or *υἱοὶ τῆς ἀδελφῆς τῆς Μαρίας*, or *τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ τοῦ Ἰωσήφ*, or at least more generally *συγγενεῖς*?¹ By doing this they would have at once prevented all future confusion among commentators; while by uniformly using the term *ἀδελφοί*, without the least intimation of a wider meaning, they certainly suggest to every unbiased reader the impression that real brothers are intended.

4. In all the passages where *brothers* and *sisters* of Jesus are mentioned, except in John vii. (where they are represented in conflict with the Lord), and 1 Cor. ix. (which was written probably after the death of Mary), they appear in close connection with him and his mother Mary, as being under her care and direction, and as forming one family. This is certainly surprising and unreasonable, if they were cousins. Why do they never appear in connection with their own supposed mother, Mary the wife of Clopas (or Alphaeus), who was living all the time, and stood under the cross (Matt. xxvii. 56; John xix. 25) and at the sepulchre (Matt. xxvii. 61).

¹ Hegesippus (ap. Eusebius, Hist. Eccles., IV. 22) speaks of cousins of Christ, calling Simeon, the successor of James in Jerusalem, *ἀνεψιὸν τοῦ Κυρίου δεύτερον*.

Lange calls to his aid the double hypothesis of an early death of Clopas (whom he assumes to have been the brother of Joseph¹) and a consequent adoption of his children by the parents of Jesus, so that they became legally his brothers and sisters. But this adoption, if true, could not destroy their relation to their natural mother Mary, who was still living, and one of the most faithful female followers of Christ. Besides the assumption, both of the early death of Clopas and the adoption of his children by Joseph, is without a shadow of either exegetical or traditionary evidence, and is made extremely improbable by the fact of the poverty of the holy family, who could not, in justice to themselves and to their own son, adopt at least half a dozen children at once (four sons and two or more daughters), especially when their own mother was still living at the time. He would have to assume that the mother likewise, after the death of her husband, lived with the holy family. But would she have given up in this case, or under any circumstances, the claim and title to, and the maternal care of, her own children? Certainly not. The more we esteem this devoted disciple, who attended the Saviour to the cross and the sepulchre (Matt. xxvii. 56, 61; John xix. 25), the less we can think her capable of such an unmotherly and unwomanly act.

5. There is no intimation anywhere in the New Testament, either by direct assertion or by implication (unless it be the disputed passage on James in Gal. i. 19), that the brothers of Christ, or any of them, were of the number of the twelve apostles. This is a mere *inference* from certain facts and combinations, which we shall consider afterwards, viz. the identity of three names, James, Simon, and Judas, which

¹ Hegesippus (in Eusebius, Hist. Eccles., III. 11) asserts that Clopas was the brother of Joseph. Lange denies that Mary the wife of Clopas was the sister of the Virgin Mary. But Lichtenstein (*Lebensgeschichte des Herrn*. Erlangen: 1856, p. 124) assumes that the two brothers, Joseph and Clopas, married two sisters, both named Mary. Clopas dying, Joseph took his wife and her children into his family. Schneckenburger reverses the hypothesis, and assumes that Mary, after the early death of Joseph, moved to the household of her sister, the wife of Clopas.

occur among the brothers of Christ and among the apostles, and the fact that a certain Mary, supposed to be the aunt of Jesus, was the mother of James and Joses (but she is never called the mother of James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude), and with the fact of the eminent apostle-like position of James the brother of the Lord in the church at Jerusalem.

6. On the contrary, the brothers of Jesus are mentioned *after* the apostles, and thus *distinguished* from them. In Acts i. 13, 14, Luke first enumerates the eleven by name, and then adds: "These all [the apostles] continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with *his brethren*." Here they seem to form a distinct class, with their mother, next to the apostles. So also 1 Cor. ix. 5: *οἱ λοιποὶ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ τοῦ Κυρίου*. Such distinct mention of the brothers after the apostles was not justified if three of the four, as is assumed by the cousin-theory, were themselves apostles, consequently only one remained to make a separate class. The narrative Matt. xii. 46-50 likewise implies that the brothers of Jesus who stood without, seeking to speak with him, were distinct from the disciples (vs. 69), who always surrounded him.

7. More than this, before the resurrection of Christ, his brothers are represented in the Gospel of John, ch. vii. 3-10, long after the call of the apostles, as *unbelievers*, who endeavored to embarrass the Saviour and to throw difficulties in his way. This makes it *morally impossible* to identify them with the apostles. Even if only one or two of the four had been among the twelve *at that time*, John could not have made the unqualified remark: "*Neither did his brethren (brothers) believe in him*" (vii. 5); for faith is the very first condition of the apostolate. Nor would Christ in this case have said to them: "My time has not yet come; but your time is always ready; the world cannot hate you; but me it hateth" (vs. 6 and 7). Nor would he have separated from them in his journey to Jerusalem. It will not do here to weaken the force of *πιστεύειν*, and to reduce their unbelief to

a mere temporary wavering and uncertainty. The case of Peter (Matt. xvi. 23), and that of Thomas (John xx. 25), are by no means parallel. The whole attitude of the brothers of Christ, as viewed by Christ and described by John, is entirely inconsistent with that of an apostle. It is an attitude, not of enemies, it is true, but of doubtful, dissatisfied friends, who assume an air of superiority, and presume to suggest to him a worldly and ostentatious policy. After the resurrection they are especially mentioned among the believers, but as a distinct class, with Mary, next the apostles.

All these considerations strongly urge the conclusion that the brothers of Christ were real brothers, according to the flesh, i.e. either later sons of Mary and Joseph, or sons of Joseph by a former marriage (more of this below), unless there are very serious difficulties in the way which make this conclusion either critically or morally or religiously impossible.

Let us now approach these difficulties :

8. There are serious but no insurmountable objections to the conclusion just stated.

(a) The first objection is the identity in *name* of three of these brothers with three of the apostles, viz. James, Simon, and Jude.¹ But it should be remembered that these were among the most common Jewish names. Josephus mentions no less than twenty-one Simons, seventeen Joses, and sixteen Judes. Why could there not be two or three persons of the same name in the apostolic church? We have, at all events, two Jameses and two Simons and two Judes among the twelve apostles. This difficulty is more than counter-balanced by the opposite difficulty of two sisters with the same name.

(b) The second objection, likewise of a critical and exegetical character, is derived from Gal. i. 19, "But other of

¹ Dr. Lange in his Article on James, in Herzog's Encyclopadie, Vol. VI. p. 412, calls this die Unhaltbarkeit einer dreinamigen Doppelgängerlinie in dem apostolischen Kreise, and afterwards eine unerhörte zwei bis vierfache Doppelgängerrei.

the apostles saw I none, save (εἰ μὴ) James the Lord's brother." Here James, who was one of the brothers of Jesus, seems to be included among the apostles; and this must have been James of Alphaeus, or James the Less.¹ But the passage bears the exactly opposite interpretation, if after εἰ μὴ we supply simply εἶδον and not εἶδον τὸν ἀπόστολον, viz. "I saw none other of the apostles besides Peter (vs. 18), but only (I saw) James, the Lord's brother." This interpretation is very old,² and is defended by some of the highest grammatical authorities of our age.³ We think, with Meyer,⁴ that James is here distinguished from the twelve to whom Peter belonged, and yet at the same time numbered with the apostles in a *wider* sense of the term. In other words, he is represented as a man who, on account of his close natural relationship to Christ and his weight of character and piety, enjoyed an apostolic dignity and authority among the strict Jewish Christians. He was the acknowledged head and leader of this branch, and the first bishop of Jerusalem, where he permanently resided and died, while the apostles proper were not fixed in a particular diocese, but travelling missionaries, with the whole world for their field of labor. That this was precisely the position of James, is evident from various passages in the Acts, in the Epistle to the Galatians, from Josephus, Hegesippus, and the traditions of the Eastern church.⁵

(c.) The third objection is of a moral character, and derived from the consideration that Christ on the cross could

¹ So Schneckenburger on the Epistle of James, and all the commentators on Galatians who adopt the cousin-hypothesis, also Ellicott ad Gal. i. 19, who, however, does not enter into a discussion of the general question.

² Victorinus, in his Commentary in *loc.*, says: "Paul disclaims James as an apostle, saying that he saw no other apostle besides Peter, but only James."

³ Winer, Grammatik (6th ed.), p. 557, (§ 67, sub. 1); who quotes, for a similar use of εἰ μὴ, Acts xxvii. 22 and Rev. xxi. 27.

⁴ In his Commentary on Gal. i. 19; Fritzsche, Commentary in Matthew, p. 482, who translates *alium apostolum non vidi, sed vidi Jacobum*; Bleek (in *Studien und Kritiken* for 1836 p. 1059), and, as to the inference drawn, also Meyer and Hilgenfeld ad Gal. i. 19.

⁵ This subject is fully discussed in the author's book on James.

not have commended his mother to the care of John if she had other sons (John xix. 26, 27). "But why," we may ask, with Andrews,¹ "if James and Judas were apostles and his cousins, sons of her sister, and long inmates of her family, and it was a question of kinship, did he not commend her to their care?" The difficulty, then, remains, and must be solved on other grounds. The brothers of Jesus at that time, as appears from John vii., were not yet full believers in Christ, although they must have been converted soon after the resurrection (Acts i. 14). Moreover John was the most intimate bosom friend of the Saviour, who could better sympathize with Mary and comfort her in this peculiar trial than any human being. If the modern interpretation of John xix. 25 be correct, as it probably is, Salome (not Mary, wife of Clopas) was a sister of Christ's mother, consequently John his cousin. But we would not urge this as an additional reason of the commendation, which must be based on a deeper spiritual affinity and sympathy.

(d.) The fourth objection is religious and dogmatical, arising from the pious or superstitious belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary, and the apparent impropriety of the birth of any later descendants of the house of David after the birth of the Messiah. The perpetual virginity of the mother of our Saviour is an article of faith in the Greek and Roman church; it is taught also in a few of the older Protestant symbols,² and held to this day by many evangelical divines. Bishop Pearson says that the church of God in all ages has maintained that Mary continued in the same virginity.³ Olshausen takes the same view, and Lange, though the latter only as far as offspring is concerned. Dr. Jos. Addison Alexander, a Presbyterian, who will not be accused of

¹ The Life of our Lord upon the Earth, p. 115.

² The Articles of Smalkald, Pars I. Art. IV. (p. 303, ed. Haß): *Et Maria pura, sancta, æsemper virgine*. The Form of Concord, p. 767: *Unde et vere Θεοτόκος, Dei genetrix est, et tamen virgo mansit*. Even Zwingli shared in this view, Commentary in Matthew i. 18, 25, and the Helvetic Confession speaks of Jesus as *natus et Maria æsemper virgine*.

³ Exposition of the Creed, Art. III.

any sympathy with Romanism, says, with apparent approbation: "Multitudes of Protestant divines and others, independently of all creeds and confessions, have believed, or rather felt, that the selection of a woman to be the mother of the Lord, carries with it, as a necessary implication, that no others could sustain the same relation to her; and that the selection of a virgin still more necessarily implied that she was to continue so; for if there be nothing in the birth of younger children inconsistent with her maternal relation to the Saviour, why should there be any such repugnance in the birth of older children likewise? The same feeling which revolts from one hypothesis in some, revolts from both hypotheses in both."¹

A doctrine or feeling so old and widely spread must be treated with proper regard and delicacy. But it should be observed:

In the first place, that these doctrinal objections hold only against the view that the brothers of Christ were younger children of Mary, not against the other alternative left, that they were older children of Joseph by a former marriage.

Secondly, the virginity of Mary can be made an article of faith only as far as it is connected with the mystery of the supernatural conception and the absolute freedom of Christ from hereditary as well as actual sin. But neither his, nor her honor require the *perpetual* virginity after his birth, unless there be something impure and unholy in the marriage relation itself. The latter we cannot admit, since God instituted marriage in the state of innocence in paradise, and Paul compares it to the most sacred relation existing — the union of Christ with his church.

Thirdly, the apostles and evangelists, who are certainly much safer guides in all matters of faith and religious

¹ Commentary on Matthew xiii. 56, pp. 383 and 384, and in the same language, Commentary on Mark vi. 3. Dr. Alexander does not decide one way or the other (though leaning to the cousin-theory), and thinks that the difference of taste and sensibility on this subject is likely to continue to affect the interpretation until the question has received some new and unequivocal solution.

feeling than even Fathers and reformers, seem to have had no such feeling of repugnance to a real marriage between Joseph and Mary, since they not only frequently mention brothers and sisters of Christ, without any intimation of an unusual or indefinite sense of the word, but Matthew and Luke (ii. 7) call Christ the first-born son of Mary, and Matthew moreover says (i. 25), that Joseph knew not Mary, i. e. did not cohabit with her as man and wife, till she had brought forth her first-born son. We admit that neither *πρωτότοκος* nor *ἕως* are conclusive in favor of subsequent cohabitation and offspring, but they naturally look that way, especially in a retrospective historical narrative, and in connection with the subsequent frequent mention of brothers and sisters of Christ by the same writers. At all events, we are warranted to say that those terms could not have been used by the evangelists if they had regarded legitimate cohabitation as essentially profane, or in any way degrading to Joseph and his mother. The Old Testament, it is well known, nowhere sustains the ascetic Romish views on the superior merits of celibacy and represents children as the greatest blessing, and sterility as a curse or misfortune.

Finally, it may be regarded as another proof of the true and full humanity and the condescending love of our Saviour, if he shared the common trials of family life in all its forms, and moved, a brother among brothers and sisters, that "he might be touched with a feeling of our infirmities." This last consideration, however, has its full weight if we adopt Dr. Lange's modification of the cousin-hypothesis, viz. the formal adoption of Christ's cousins into the holy family.

9. It remains to be seen whether the cousin-theory is more free from difficulties. This theory is very old and goes back, not only to Jerome, as is generally stated, but even to Papias, at the beginning of the second century,¹ probably also

¹ In a remarkable fragment on the four Marys (ap Routh, *Reliquiae Sacrae et Cod. MSS. 2397*): 1. *Maria, mater Domini.* 2. *Maria, Cleophae sive Alphaei uxor, quae fuit mater Jacobi Episcopi et Apostoli, et Simonis, et Thadei [Judae Jacobi]. et cujusdam Joseph.* 3. *Maria Salome, uxor Zobede'* -----

to Hegesippus, although this may be disputed, and has the authority of the whole Latin church, and the older Protestant divines, who, however, paid very little attention to this question.¹ But this theory did not obtain credit and currency without an undue weight of dogmatical considerations connected with the perpetual virginity of Mary and the superior sanctity of celibacy (as is very evident from Jerome's work against Helvidius). It has, moreover, to contend with all the facts presented under Nos. 1 - 7, which are as many arguments against it. And finally it has to call to its aid two assumptions, which are at least very doubtful, and give the theory an intricate and complicated character. These assumptions are:

(a.) That Mary, the mother of James and Joses (Matt. xxvii. 56; Mark xv. 40), was a sister of the virgin Mary, and that consequently her children were cousins of Jesus. But who ever heard of two sisters bearing the same name without any additional one by which to distinguish them? Then, the only passage on which the alleged relationship of the two Marys is based (John xix. 25), admits of a different and more probable explanation, by which the term "his mother's sister" is applied to Salome,² who stood certainly under the cross (see Matt. xxvii. 56; Mark xv. 40), and could not well be passed by in silence by her own son, John; while he with his accustomed modesty and delicacy omitted her name, and intimated her presence by bringing out her relation to Mary.

(b.) That Clopas, or Cleophas, the husband of Mary, the

evangelistae et Jacobi. 4. *Maria Magdalena*. But Papias omits one, *Mary* of Bethany, and is well known to have been somewhat weak-minded, superstitious, and confused; although in a mere matter of fact his testimony may, nevertheless, be very valuable.

¹ Calvin, for instance, regards the question as one of idle curiosity, in Matthew i. 25: *Certe nemo unquam hac de re questionem movebit nisi curiosus; nemo vero pertinaciter insistet nisi contentiosus rixator.*

² This explanation was first clearly brought out by Wieseler (in the *Studien und Kritiker* for 1840, p. 648 seq.), and adopted by Meyer, Lange, and Alford. But the old Syriac Version already implied this interpretation by inserting a *sa!*

supposed sister of the virgin Mary, is the same with Alphaeus, the father of James, the younger apostle of that name, who is called Ἰάκωβος ὁ τοῦ Ἀλφαίου (Matt. x. 3; Mark ii. 14, iii. 18; Luke vi. 15; Acts i. 13). But this, though not improbable, and supported by the testimony of Papias, is at least not certain. Besides, Matthew (or Levi) was also a son of Alphaeus (Mark ii. 14), and if Ἰούδας Ἰακώβου and Simeon, two of the twelve, were likewise among the brothers of Christ, we should have four apostles, of whom it is said in John vii. that they did not believe. Finally, Mary, it should be remembered, is called the mother of James and Joses only, but never the mother of Simon and Jude, the other two brothers of Jesus, and both of them supposed to have been apostles, which Joses was not. It is nowhere intimated that he had more sons than two, or any daughters at all, and even from her two sons, one Joses must be exempt from being a namesake, since *Joseph*, and not *Joses*, according to the correct reading (Matt. xiii. 55), is the second brother of Christ.

Dr. Lange, it is true, avoids some of these difficulties by giving up the sisterhood of the two Marys, and assuming in its place the brotherhood of Clopas, or Alphaeus, and Joseph¹ as the basis for the cousinship of their sons, and calling to his aid the additional hypothesis of the early death of Alphaeus, and the adoption of his children into the holy family; but all this without a shadow of exegetical proof. The absence of all allusion in the Evangelists to Mary, the real and still living mother of these children, when they are collectively mentioned, is a surprising fact, which speaks as strongly against Lange's hypothesis as against the older and usual form of the cousin-theory.

10. We conclude, therefore, that the strict grammatical

before *Μαρια*, and translating: "And there were standing near the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister [Salome], and Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene."

¹ Hegesippus, in Eusebius, Hist. Eccles. III. 11, compare IV. 22, asserts that Clopas was the brother of Joseph, but it does not appear whether he uses the term "brother" strictly, or for brother-in-law.

explanation of the term *brothers* and *sisters* of Christ, though not without difficulties, is still far more easy and natural than the explanation which makes them mere cousins.

But from the exegetical data of the New Testament we are still at liberty to choose between two views :

(a.) The brothers of Jesus were *younger children of Joseph and Mary*, and hence his *uterine* brothers, though, in fact, only half brothers, since he had no human father, and was conceived by the Holy Spirit overshadowing the blessed virgin. This view may be supported by the *ἕως* and the *πρωτότοκος* in Matt. i. 25, and Luke ii. 7, and has been adopted by Tertullian, Helvidius, and many modern Protestant commentators of Germany, as Herder, Neander, Winer, Meyer, Wieseler, Rothe, Stier, and a few English divines, Alford (on Matt. xiii. 55), F. W. Farrar (in W. Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. I. p. 23), and, though not decidedly, by Andrews (Life of our Lord, p. 114). This view of the case is the most natural, and would probably be taken by a majority of commentators, if it were not for the scruples arising from the long and cherished doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary. Once clearly and fully established on the testimony of scripture and history, this theory would give a powerful polemical weapon into the hands of Protestants, and destroy by one fatal blow one of the strongest pillars of Romish Mariology and Mariolatry, and the ascetic overestimate of the state of celibacy. But the case is by no means so clear, at the present state of the controversy, that we can avail ourselves of this advantage; and Protestants themselves, as already remarked, differ in their views or feelings or tastes concerning the perpetual virginity of Mary.

(b.) The brothers of Jesus were *older sons of Joseph* from a *former* marriage, and thus, in the eyes of the law and before the world, though not by blood, brothers and sisters of Christ. This view has the doctrinal advantage of leaving the perpetual virginity of Mary untouched. It seems, moreover, to have been the oldest, and was held not only among

the Ebionites and in the pseudo-apostolical constitutions, but by several earlier Fathers, as Origin, Eusebius (who calls James of Jerusalem a "son of Joseph," but nowhere of Mary), Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Alexandria, Epiphanius, who even mentions the supposed order of births of the four sons and two daughters, Hilary, Ambrose, etc. It is equally consistent with the scripture data on the subject as the other alternative, and in some respects even more so. For it agrees better with the apparent difference of age between Joseph (who early disappears in the gospel history) and Mary, and especially with the patronizing and presumptuous air of the brethren of Christ, when they sought an interview with him at a particular crisis (Matt. xii. 46), and when they boldly dared to suggest to him a more expeditious and ostentatious Messianic policy (John vii. 3-10). This is at least more readily explained if they were older according to the flesh; while on the other theory some of them must have been almost too young to figure so prominently in the gospel history. It is true, they are nowhere called *sons of Joseph*;¹ but neither are they called *sons of Mary*. The reason in both cases must be found in the fact that Christ is the great central figure in the Gospels, round which all others move.

¹ See the quotations in the author's book on James, p. 80 seq. Chrysostom may also be included in this class; at least he clearly separates the brethren of Christ from the apostles, for the reason that they were for a long time unbelievers (Hom. v. in Matthew).