

## ARTICLE VI

## THE BRETHREN OF OUR LORD.

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WHO were the brethren of the Lord? His brothers, or cousins? They are mentioned fifteen times in the New Testament, and in each instance the original word is ἀδελφός.

Now by etymology and usage this word means brother. It is a compound of *a* copulative and δελφύς, meaning *matrix*. If therefore the sacred writers had wanted to make it sure that they spoke of uterine brothers of Christ, ἀδελφός was the word to use. When speaking of the brothers of Christ they have chosen this particular word in every instance. That this was choice in them, and not chance, is evident from the fact that in every other case in the New Testament where cousin is meant, some other expression is used, and not ἀδελφός. Those writers were not short for terms. They had a language as rich in these specifications of near kinship as our own. If they wanted to say cousin they had a word for it, and they used it, as in Col. iv. 10, where Mark is called cousin to Barnabas; the word is ἀνεψιός, which means literally cousin (See also Tobit vii. 2, LXX). Again, in Acts xxiii. 16, Paul's sister's son is spoken of as ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀδελφῆς Παύλου: this means nephew, but by a change of the proper name alone, would mean cousin. Again the more general term συγγενής, meaning kinsman, relative, is used in the New Testament no less than eleven times, often meaning cousin. Thus, in Luke i. 36, Elizabeth is called συγγενής to Mary; they were cousins. In v. 58 the same word is translated cousins, where it speaks of her "neighbors and cousins," οἱ συγγενεῖς. When Jesus, on the way home from the temple, was lost, and his parents sought him "amongst their kinsfolk," the word used is the same: ἐν τοῖς συγγενέσιν.

This line of search will show plainly that the sacred writers were not compelled by poverty of language or custom to say brother if they meant cousin. If it be true that they meant cousin where they have used ἀδελφός, while three other legitimate New Testament expressions were open to them — two of which were unmistakable, — it is certainly strange that they did not even once in these fifteen times say cousin, or Mary's sister's son, or Joseph's brother's son, or kinsman, and so make their meaning plain. Especially is this strange, if we must suppose that they wished to teach that Jesus had no younger brothers. They chose to say brothers every time; and this, in the circumstances, must be considered a strong presumptive argument that they meant brothers, and not cousins. It is a sound rule of interpretation that, wherever it is possible, words are to be taken in their simple and literal meaning.

It is urged against this view, that the word ἀδελφός is not always used in its exact etymological sense; that the meaning is often greatly extended. According to Jewish usage it covers a wide range of relationship, and so may include that of cousin. Besides it is commonly used without regard to natural kinship. In far the greater number of cases in the New Testament it cannot mean brother according to the flesh.

This objection is made up of fact and inference. We may admit the one, but not the other. The fact is that the word ἀδελφός is used oftener than otherwise in an extended or a metaphorical sense. The inference is, that the use of the word ἀδελφός in the New Testament is not of itself a strong presumptive argument that the meaning is true, natural brother; i.e. that it does not furnish presumptive evidence against the theory that these so-called brothers of Christ were only cousins. This inference is altogether unsupported either by the literal or the metaphorical use of the term in scripture. Let us examine it. Look first at the usage of the word in the literal sense, i.e. meaning relationship by blood. Notice that in the Bible ἀδελφός never means cousin unless you beg the question, and take for granted that it has this meaning

in this particular connection. No parallel case can be found. The assumption here would require us to admit an exceptional use of the word, without a parallel in scripture, uncalled for, and repeated fifteen times without any qualifying word or phrase.

Now look at the actual extension of the meaning of the word, and we shall see that far too much stress has been laid on the indefiniteness of meaning attached to the word ἀδελφός in scripture. What are the facts? In the original scriptures the word when not used metaphorically is always used in its narrowest literal sense, meaning strictly brother. In the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, to be sure, there are just two cases, only two, where the word is used literally and yet does not mean own brother. In other cases, where it means countryman, one of the same tribe, ally, companion, without implying any degree of relationship by blood, it cannot be said to be used literally. But in Gen. xiii. 8 and xxix. 12 Lot and Jacob are called brothers of Abraham and Laban, when in fact they were nephews. Yet Lot very likely was brother-in-law as well as nephew to Abraham; if so that would dispose of one of these two cases. Besides, in both instances, scripture explains itself; the matter is not left in any doubt.

But granting that these two cases are every way in point, see what assumptions are founded upon them. It is claimed first that the early Hebrew אָבִי is exactly equivalent to the New Testament Greek ἀδελφός; and then secondly that because this Hebrew word אָבִי in a single book written seventeen centuries earlier than the gospels, is twice extended so as to mean nephew, the extension being fully rectified in the same book; therefore in these fifteen instances from five different writers in a later and far more copious language, the Greek word ἀδελφός must mean cousin. This last assumption rests somewhat heavily upon the first; and the first is left like the bull in the eastern cosmogony, whose great horns support the world.

Turn now from the literal to the metaphorical use of the

word, and see what bearing that has upon the question. The meaning of a metaphor we learn only from the same word in its literal signification. Thus when the psalmist says: "The Lord is my high tower," we can tell what he means only as we learn exactly what a high tower is. We do not come at it by way of a mountain or a tree, but by way of a high tower, and nothing else. The precise literal meaning of the word is carried over into new relations, and that is a metaphor.

By an easy metaphor Christians are often called in scripture "brethren," "brethren in Christ," etc. Now what does this mean? What is the exact literal meaning that is brought over in all these cases? We must explain the figure by that. Is it cousinship or nephewship, or some other form of undefined relationship? It must be brotherhood; it can be nothing else. We look for an explanation of the figure to the relation of brothers in the same family, and not to that of cousins, nor to any other relationship. Believers are peculiarly brothers by virtue of adoption by one and the same Father; brothers, not cousins, by virtue of oneness with the Son of God; brothers, by virtue of having been begotten by one and the same Spirit; brothers, by virtue of a peculiar love for each other, such as belongs to no natural kinship but that of brothers; brothers, by virtue of a common and equal inheritance; brothers, it must be, in every view, and not cousins, nor anything else, wherever the word is used metaphorically. The metaphor has its ground and limitations in the literal meaning of the word. It has no power of extension beyond this. So far, then, as it has any bearing on the question before us, the metaphorical use of the word *ἀδελφός* is against those who hold the cousin-theory respecting the so-called brothers of Christ. If the word *ἀνεψιός* had been used even once instead of *ἀδελφός* it would have gone far towards deciding the question. What must we infer when the word *ἀδελφός* is used invariably?

Ten times out of the fifteen these brothers are mentioned in immediate connection with the mother of Jesus, all as

if forming one and the same family. This is natural if they were sons of Mary, but very strange on the theory that they were only cousins of the Saviour, their own mother being alive all the while.

In John vii. 5 we read: "Neither did his brethren believe in him." But if this means cousins it cannot be true; for, on this theory, two of the four brothers were actual apostles at this time. Besides, he had a cousin Matthew among the twelve, and John the Baptist was his cousin. Here would be four cousins who did believe on him. Take the passage in its literal meaning in its connection, and it would show that these brothers could not have been included among the twelve apostles. This gives a reason for distinguishing them from the apostles, as is done elsewhere. It will not do to weaken the force of *οὐδὲ ἐπίστευον*; for vs. 31, 39, 48, and the connection of v. 1, show what is meant. The whole attitude of the brothers towards Christ is inconsistent with the theory that they were already his chosen disciples (see Matt. xii. 46-50). On the contrary, after the resurrection they are reckoned among the followers of Christ, but still are expressly distinguished from the apostles. (See Acts i. 13, 14.)

If only the relationship of cousins be meant where they are called brothers, then the words can be interchanged without damage to the sense. Put them now to this test of substitution, as the immersionists have attempted, and read the new version (Matt. xii. 46): "While he yet talked with the people, behold, his mother and his *cousins* stood without. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy *cousins* stand without. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? And who are my *cousins*? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my *cousins*. For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my *cousin* (*ἀδελφός*) and *female cousin* (*ἀδελφή*) and mother." Now this not only sounds odd, but it also hurts the sense. Logic demands the closest relationships here, and will not be satisfied with anything else, — especially in the

closing metaphor. The meaning plainly is: Whosoever shall give real evidence of true faith by sincere obedience, the same shall be as dear to me as my own nearest relatives according to the flesh, or as the nearest natural kindred are to any one; and certainly own brothers and sisters are nearer and dearer than cousins. Matt. xiii. 55 read: "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his *cousins*, James and Josés<sup>1</sup> and Simon and Judas? And his *female cousins*, are they not all with us?" Now, it empties this protest of force, if not of sense, to suppose that those scoffers really said this. The circumstances require that they mean brothers and sisters, just as literally as they meant carpenter and mother. This was their point: We know this man—that he is no more than the rest of us; his father and mother and brothers and sisters are well-known; there is nothing in him, of course, different from the rest of the family. This is plausible; but to argue a man's capacity or talents from his cousin's is not very close reasoning. If he were the only child the argument would naturally, if not of necessity, stop with the well-known father and mother, from whom he is supposed to inherit his qualities. It would not help the matter to suppose that the children of some other parents were known to be only ordinary people. Moreover, the Saviour's answer seems to go upon the supposition that these were his own brothers and sisters: "A prophet is not without honor save in his own country and among his own kin (*συγγενέων*) and in his own house." Notice the climax. Where he is best known he is least honored; and this is the order of progress: his fatherland; then his kindred, which, as we have seen, would naturally include all relatives except the immediate family; then his own house, which would naturally cover these very relatives which have just been mentioned—his father and mother and brothers and sisters.

<sup>1</sup> The true reading is doubtless Joseph, according to the Cod. Sin., which is adopted by Meyer, Tregelles, Alford, and Conant. If this be so, there is one brother less bearing the same name as one of the sons of Mary the wife of Alpheus.

John vii. 3, 5, 10: "His *cousins* therefore said unto him, Depart, . . . . For neither did his *cousins* believe in him. . . . . But when his *cousins* were gone up," etc. Now why so much notice taken of his cousins? What if his cousins did or did not believe in him? Does it follow that a man's cousins must fall in and support him? But suppose it to mean just what it says — brothers, — and we see a good reason for a particular mention. These were the very ones who would naturally be expected to know him best, and help him most. It is worthy of mention that these did not believe in him. Remember, too, what has been already stated, that on the theory that these were cousins the language cannot be reconciled with the fact that two, at least, out of the four, or, if Matthew be counted in, three out of five, did believe in him, and were already chosen as apostles. The supposition that they were real brothers harmonizes with this fact, and with the statements that represent them as distinct from the twelve apostles.

Acts i. 14 (The names of the eleven apostles has just been given): "These all continued with one accord in prayer, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his *cousins*." Notice the close connection of mother and brothers; and how they seem to be separate from the eleven apostles. We can see no such reason for the mention of cousins as we can for that of literal brothers.

1 Cor. ix. 5: "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as other apostles and as the *cousins* of the Lord and Cephas?" Here observe the singular inconsistency of such a translation. In the same sentence ἀδελφίην is rendered sister, but ἀδελφοί must be extended so as to mean cousins. Both are alike unqualified. Or, if it be not called an inconsistency of translation, it must be regarded as a singular confusion of language in the writer. There is no metaphor here, — nothing to indicate that the words are not to be taken in their literal meaning. The literal sense, too, as elsewhere, answers every requirement of the thought.

Gal. i. 19: "Other of the apostles saw I none, save James

the Lord's *cousin*." It is claimed that this James must have been one of the twelve apostles. But it is not necessary. He might be an apostle, and not be one of the twelve, as Paul and Barnabas were apostles. And even this is not necessary. The *εἰ μὴ* of this verse may modify, not *ἔτερον*, but the whole previous clause. For similar usage see v. 7 same chapter, also Rev. xxi. 27. Winer, Neander, Bleek, Meyer, Lange, and Alford agree substantially with Fritzsche, who translates: "Alium apostolum non vidi, sed vidi Jacobum."

This view of the passage agrees best with the Saviour's commission to the twelve — not to be settled over particular churches, but to go into all the world. For all agree that this James was the head of the mother church at Jerusalem. On the theory that he was a brother of Christ, it is not to be wondered at that he should rise to such dignity of office.

The same substitution in the rest of the passages would show a similar result. The cousin-theory cannot stand this test. On the other hand, the supposition that they are rightly called brothers makes good sense in every instance, and gives force to the sentiment.

Some objections to the brother-theory have already been considered. There are others to be attended to.

It has been urged that these persons are never called the sons of Mary, but uniformly the brothers of Christ. This is sufficiently accounted for by the fact that Christ is the central figure in the Gospels round which the others move; their connection with him was more significant than their relationship to Mary or Joseph.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There is one passage more which is worthy of notice in this connection. Ps. lxix. is regarded as Messianic, in part at least. Both parts of v. 9 are applied to Christ (John ii. 17; Rom. xv. 3). Verse 7 is similar in form to v. 9, and identical in meaning. The spirit of Christ which was in the psalmist, "testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ." Verse 9 is applied by inspiration to Christ; v. 7 surely received its highest fulfilment in the insulted Saviour. Now if verses 9 and 7 are plainly Messianic it would seem that v. 8 would also be, provided it can bear such an application. And it not only can bear such an application, but if so applied it yields the only form of proof that is claimed to be wanting to establish the fact that the Saviour had true broth-



Another objection is drawn from the fact that the Saviour on the cross commended his mother to John, which he would not have done if she had had other sons. But to this it may be answered: (1) We do not know that his brothers were present; (2) They did not at that time believe in him; (3) The same objection would hold against the cousin-theory: it would be passing by those who were very familiar with Mary, near of kin to her, and apostles of Christ; (4) If "woman behold thy son" implies that Mary had no son, then "behold thy mother" implies that John had no mother. We are not told why John was selected. We may suppose the choice was based on deep spiritual affinity and sympathy.

Another objection is urged from the fact that three of the brothers, James, Simon, and Jude, have the same name with three of the apostles, and hence were probably the same persons; and the three apostles were not sons of Mary the mother of Jesus: two of them we know were sons of Alpheus. But this argument has little weight when we remember how very common these names were. In the New Testament there are five different Jameses and several Judes; and Josephus mentions twenty-one different Simons, seventeen Joses, and sixteen Judes. Where names are so frequently repeated it is not very improbable that two or three of the brothers of the Lord might bear the same name as their cousins. Besides, this objection comes unexpectedly from those whose theory compels them to regard these brothers as the children of Mary's sister, and that sister's name as Mary also.<sup>1</sup> That is, two sisters may be called Mary, but two cousins cannot be called James. They swallow the camel, but the gnat is too much of a strain for them.

The greatest practical obstacle to the brother-theory is the *crs.* It reads: "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children."

<sup>1</sup> John xix. 25 is quoted to sustain this position. But probably in that verse four different persons are enumerated, and the name of the sister of the mother of Jesus (Salome?) is omitted. So Wieseler, Meyer, Lange, Alford. Besides this theory is insecure as to the name of the father. It assumed that Alpheus and Clopas are one and the same person; but this is not certain.

doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary. But the virginity of Mary can be made an article of belief from scripture, only so far as the birth of Christ is concerned. Neither his sinlessness nor Mary's honor require her subsequent virginity. Scripture guards her virginity just so far and no further. After that point is cleared she is treated like any other married woman; and we are left to believe respecting her just what her situation in life would imply. Matt. i. 25: "*οὐκ ἐγίνωσκεν αὐτὴν ἕως οὗ ἔτεκεν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς τὸν πρωτότοκον.*" This becomes weak if not senseless on the theory that Mary remained a virgin after she brought forth her first born. On that theory what is stated so carefully of Joseph respecting Mary, would be just as true of Joseph respecting every virgin that ever lived; he knew not one of them all till she brought forth her first born (nor then either). For the force of *ἕως οὗ* see Luke xxiv. 49; Matt. xiii. 33.<sup>1</sup> Scripture does not tolerate the notion that there is anything wrong or impure in the condition of marriage. It existed by divine appointment before man sinned; it is the chosen emblem of the purest spiritual relation—that between Christ and his church. The Bible makes children a blessing, sterility a curse. Of this passage Professor B. B. Edwards says: "The perpetual virginity of Mary is inferred from half a verse which by natural implication teaches the direct contrary."

The cousin-theory is held by some as a safeguard to the doctrine of the miraculous conception. But this evident doctrine of the Bible needs no help; much less such help and lame defenders. They urge that because the brother-theory has been held by some who deny the miraculous conception, therefore it fairly leads to this result. But there is no logical connection between the two. Christ was born of

<sup>1</sup> No decisive argument can be drawn from the use of the word *πρωτότοκον*, for the ancient Jewish usage applied it to that which opened the womb, without regard to subsequent offspring. The tampering with the text at this point is interesting, as indicating a desire to save the doctrine of the perpetual virginity. Many Latin versions omit the term altogether, one translates it *unigenitum*. Ezek. xlv. 2 was once relied on as a proof of the doctrine of the perpetual virginity.

a virgin, whether she who was a virgin up to his birth afterward had children or not.

Another form of doctrinal objection is founded upon prophecy. Gen. xlix. 10: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh come." But this does not require the subsequent virginity of Mary. The sceptre was in Judah, and governors did come out of that tribe till Judea became a province of the Roman empire at the time when Christ was born (See Luke ii. 1). And the Jews themselves declared: "We have no king but Caesar." But that the race ran out at that time, or that this particular family had no further descendants, is a needless assumption.

Glance now at the history of opinion on this subject.

The oldest tradition, held by distinguished Fathers in the Greek and the Latin church, regarded these persons as brothers, in distinction from cousins. The brother-theory is the oldest. The Ebionites held it. Here belong such names as Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Alexandria, Epiphanius, Hilary, Ambrose, and Eusebius. It grew to be the recognized belief of the Greek church. Chrysostom seems to have adopted it. This ancient brother-theory, however, though accurately so-called, was held in a peculiar modification. These persons were regarded as brothers of Christ on the father's side, the children of Joseph by a previous marriage, and not the children of Mary. To this view some eminent modern writers incline; among them Dr. Schaff.

The advantages claimed for this modification are: (1) It saves the perpetual virginity of Mary; (2) It seems to harmonize with the apparent age of Joseph (who disappears so early from the narrative), and with the age of the brothers themselves who appear to patronize the Saviour as if they were older; (3) It meets all the requirements of a critical exegesis.

On the other hand, it is damaging to this view, if not fatal, that it has no positive scripture in its favor. These brothers are not called sons of any other woman, nor are they ever mentioned in connection with Joseph, as we should expect.

The theory begins in a bare supposition and has no better basis. We are not told that Joseph had a previous wife; there is no intimation of it. If we grant this one assumption, no difficulty remains, — but how to grant it? The old philosopher offered to move the world if they would only give him a place to stand. The advocates of this theory do not even ask this; they only ask you not to mind the deficiency.

The next tradition in point of age is the cousin-theory, according to which these persons were the children of Mary's sister Mary and Alpheus or Clopas. This may be traced back to Papias in the second century. Clement of Alexandria held it, also Jerome, Augustine, and perhaps the majority of English writers. The Reformers seem to have paid little attention to the question. Calvin calls the subject one of idle curiosity. Zwingli adopted the cousin-theory. It appears also in the Helvetic Confession. It became the prevailing belief of the Western church, and is the modern papal doctrine.

Lange adopts this view in a changed form, making the brothers cousins of Christ, not by the sisterhood of their mothers, but by the brotherhood of their fathers, Joseph and Alpheus or Clopas. But all that is peculiar in his view is gratuitous supposition; it has no support in scripture.

This cousin-theory is very widely adopted. If it be untrue the adoption of it is a phenomenon to be accounted for. And a sufficient explanation is found in the dogmas of the perpetual virginity and the well-known ascetic notions of the Romish church from the beginning, that celibacy is a holier state than marriage. Then as a kind of delicate feeling it seems to have been retained in many branches of the Protestant church. Jeremy Taylor says any one may hold this as one of the "pie credibilia." Dr. Alexander of Princeton seems rather to approve it, but expressly as a feeling, and not as a distinctive belief.

One more theory, hardly worth mentioning, is that of a levirate marriage of Joseph to the widow of his brother

Clopas, to raise up seed to his brother. But this is arbitrary and idle.

The theory that these persons were children of Joseph and Mary, true younger brothers and sisters of Jesus, is not without a history. It cannot be traced to its origin, but in the fourth century its advocates had attained to the strength of a party in the church, with a distinctive name, the Antidicomarianitae. These rejected all homage of Mary, and asserted that she bore children to Joseph after the birth of Jesus. This was in Arabia. At the same time Helvidius at Rome and Bonosus bishop of Sardica arrayed themselves against the church views respecting celibacy and monastic life, and also against the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary. The Romish monk, Jovinian, distinguished himself by a severe attack upon the entire ascetic tendency of the church. Even Augustine was compelled to admit the element of truth in Jovinian.

This true brother-theory was adopted by Tertullian and Helvidius. Among Protestants we find such names as Herder, Neander, Winer, Meyer, Wieseler, Rothe, Stier; also Davidson, Alford, and Hackett. Says Hackett: "Undoubtedly the view that Jesus had brothers who were the sons of Mary is the one which an unforced exegesis requires." Says Schaff respecting the same view: "It is the most natural, and would probably be taken by a majority of commentators if it were not for scruples arising from the long and widely cherished doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary."

It remains only to add a word respecting the use of such a discussion as this.

(1) This theory restores to several passages of scripture their plain and obvious meaning.

(2) If it be established that the Saviour had younger brothers, then nothing, it is believed, but a question of taste prevents the Protestant church from wielding an effective weapon against the Mariology and Mariolatry of the papal church and its false estimate of the state of celibacy.

(3) If sustained, this theory adds new lustre to the Sa-

viour's character, as it flings a ray of light across those thirty years of his unwritten history, by which we are enabled to see him at home, moving, a brother, among younger brothers and sisters; tried in these common ways in which we are found wanting, "tempted in all points like as we are," "that he might be touched with a feeling of our infirmities."

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## ARTICLE VII.

### RIVAL EDITIONS OF THE TEXT OF THE NEW TESTAMENT AS CONTAINED IN THE CODEX VATICANUS.<sup>1</sup>

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In the three publications named below, we have at length, after so long delay and so many fruitless attempts, a quite satisfactory representation of the text of the celebrated Vatican manuscript, so far as it can be truly exhibited in a mere transcription and with moveable types. The collation by Bartolucci (1669), and the two procured by Bentley (about 1720 and 1726), and the partial one by Birch (1788), left much uncertainty in regard to its text. The professed publication of the text of the whole MS. by Cardinal Mai (five vols. 4to., 1857; New Testament, 2d ed., 1 vol. 8vo., 1859) disappointed expectation, and added little to the knowledge of its text. The illiberal jealousy of its guardians has long imposed such restrictions on its use, that no thorough and satisfactory collation could be made. Only here and there could a disputed reading be verified, during

<sup>1</sup> *Novum Testamentum Vaticanum*; post Angeli Maii aliorumque imperfectos labores ex ipso codice edidit Ae. F. C. Tischendorf. 1 vol. 4to., pp. L and 284. Lips. 1867.

*Bibliorum Sacrorum Graecus Codex Vaticanus*; auspice Pio IX. Pontifico Maximo, collatis studiis Caroli Vercellone Sodalis Barnabitarum et Josephi Cozza Monachi Basiliani editus. (Tom. v. complectens Novum Testamentum.) 1 vol. fol., pp. 302. Romae, 1868.

Appendix Novi Testamenti Vaticani. Inest Apocalypsis ex codice unciali Vaticano 2066, etc. Edidit Const. Tischendorf. 4to. pp. 20. Lips. 1859.