

*PROFESSOR MAYOR AND THE HELVIDIAN  
HYPOTHESIS.*

IN an article, entitled *The Helvidian versus the Epiphonian Hypothesis*, in the EXPOSITOR for July and August, Professor Mayor has re-stated his arguments on behalf of the former theory ; and, in so doing, has devoted considerable space to an article on the "Brethren of the Lord" which appeared in the April number of the *Church Quarterly Review*. To the criticism passed by him on the objections brought against that theory I am now, by the courtesy of the Editor, permitted to offer a reply.

At the outset Professor Mayor complains that in attempting to tie him down to a single point, I have treated him with less than justice ; but I should take this reproof more to heart had he shown greater care to state his grievance with exact fairness. I had expressed regret at the tendency among my opponents to make over-confidence in assertion serve in the place of cogency of argument ; and, as an instance, I gave the bold plea that "Tertullian is the first who distinctly asserts that the brethren were the uterine brothers of the Lord," and I went on to say that it is "apparently on the strength of this statement" that the author claims to have proved his case. It will be observed that, in reproducing this, my critic ignores the word which carries the sting in his utterance and omits the qualifying word in mine!<sup>1</sup> If any one will turn to the passage (p.74), he will not be unaware, I think, of a manifest desire on my part to be fair to those whom I was criticising ; and I wish that Professor Mayor had met any unintentional shortcomings of this kind by showing me how easy it is to refute another's arguments and at the same time be scrupulously fair in representing his case. So far, however,

<sup>1</sup> i.e. by omitting the words, "*distinctly*" and "*apparently*."

from thus heaping generous coals of fire on my head, he often shows himself at small pains to understand me and singularly careless about putting my views accurately before his readers. For instance, in reference to my account of the martyrdom of St. James, he charges me with enriching the original story by "adding to it the ascription to him of the supreme merit of virginity." But he will be hard put to it to produce any word of mine to justify this statement, which, moreover, as he ought to know very well, is in flat contradiction to my interpretation of St. Luke's phrase *Jude of James* on page 89, where I say that the most natural rendering of the words would be *Jude, son of James, the Lord's brother*. Again, and more seriously, he quite misleads his readers as to my attitude towards the question of the relative age between our Lord and the brethren. Dealing with this, he says (p. 35), "The reason that he assigns for supposing that the brothers were older than our Lord is to me very extraordinary." I can only say in reply that by far the most extraordinary thing about this is that Professor Mayor should have allowed himself so utterly to misrepresent my position. On the three previous pages I had given in numbered paragraphs four reasons which, among others, point in my judgment to the conclusion that the brethren were older than the Lord. Then in a paragraph which begins with the words "Before leaving this question," I went on to protest against the line of argument pursued by my present critic. I endeavoured to show that the picture of the Son of Man portrayed in the Gospels is by no means that of One "wanting in knowledge of the world as it was, and needing the constant care of His more practical friends" to look after Him, but of One "singularly wide awake and clear-sighted in His scrutiny of men and circumstances: marvellously alert to grasp all the conditions of a situation at a glance:

anticipating with discriminating foresight the needs and the dangers of those dependent upon Him, and as precise, as thoughtful and considerate in making provision for their safety." It was open to my critic to demonstrate that his reading of the sacred narrative is more accurate than mine, but it was hardly fair to quote words of mine as applying to the main question which in fact dealt solely with his method of dealing with it ;—an entirely different matter !

Though Professor Mayor brings to the consideration of the subject a wealth of learning which few can match, and a discursive use of which I must say tends at times to obscure the exact point at issue, his position is a simple one, and is covered—in his own words—by two propositions (p. 18) : " the scriptural evidence is conclusive in itself " : and " there is an amplitude of confirmatory evidence which we have no right to ignore." Since an examination of these propositions can only be made by traversing well-trodden ground I must crave the forbearance and patience of my readers while I review the several questions raised by them in the light of my critic's attitude to the views expressed in my essay.

The scriptural evidence is strictly confined within narrow limits and is practically contained in eight passages of the New Testament, and these naturally subdivide themselves into three classes :—(a) Those which *primâ facie* support the theory, and upon which its case primarily rests ; (b) Those which incidentally corroborate the above ; and (c) those which raise obstacles to its acceptance. I propose to review the subject under these three heads.

(a) Three passages comprise the evidence which belongs to this class :—The Gospel of the Infancy as told (1) from Joseph's point of view in the First Gospel ; (2) from the Virgin's in the Third Gospel ; and (3) the incident recorded in St. Mark vi. 1-6 and parallel passages.

*The narrative in St. Matthew's Gospel.* Of this narrative I said that Professor Mayor finds in it a wider and more general inference than the author contemplated in penning it. As my clumsy diction appears to irritate my critic I am glad to be able to express the objection in the words of another.<sup>1</sup> "The Evangelist," he says, "is not (even by implication) comparing together the connubial relations of Joseph and Mary before and after the birth of Jesus . . . but simply affirming in the strongest possible way that Joseph" was not the father of our Lord. It is his inability or unwillingness to recognize this distinction that debar Professor Mayor from seeing what is so patent to others, viz., that his illustrations of *Michal* and *the adjournment of the debate* are no less beside the mark than are those of Pearson which he condemns: the state of the case being that while the Bishop wrecks his argument on the Scylla of an illogical illustration, the Professor runs his clean on to the Charybdis of a non-parallel one. This alone, too, can explain the light-hearted way in which he waves aside the awkward fact that, three years after the limit on which he lays such stress is passed, the narrative still speaks of the "young Child and His mother" in exactly the same way as on the day after His birth. He does not see the inconsistency of insisting on the one hand that a statement occurring in the early part of the narrative should be allowed to bear its fullest implication as to the married life of Joseph and Mary, and then on the other airily brushing aside a statement dependent on that condition with the remark that this matter is outside the writer's ken. Professor Mayor ought to see that he cannot have it both ways; he cannot both contract and widen the scope of a narrative as it suits his case. We say that in accordance with the author's explicit assertion, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on

<sup>1</sup> C. Harris in *Dictionary of Christ*, i. 235.

this wise," we shall be doing well to keep within the limits of his story and not draw conclusions from it about a wider question ; Professor Mayor sees the force of this in one part of the narrative, so he should concede it to us in the other.

In order to make my point clearer I gave an account of the origin and purpose of this section of the First Gospel which so disturbed the equanimity of my critic that he had to put a kind of restraint on himself to forbear speaking harshly of me. While I am grateful for his patience I must admit that I do not understand the exact cause of his disquietude. He has read the Bishop of Birmingham's dissertation, so he must be aware, apart from my references, that I was simply following the lead of one of our foremost expositors of Holy Writ. Here are some of the sentences occurring in the essay :—*Joseph like Zacharias would have been able to write :—It is only natural to suppose that he would have left behind him some document, clearing up by his own testimony the circumstances of the birth of Jesus :—His testimony would have been imperatively needed :—This document he must, we should suppose, have given to Mary to vindicate by means of it when occasion demanded her own virginity.*<sup>1</sup> Of this simple account of the human element in the Divine narrative Professor Mayor exclaims, "What a strange fancy that one who had such proofs of God's protecting providence should have supposed that a memorandum from himself was required to guard his wife's honour, or could have dreamt that an affidavit signed by him would have had the effect of shielding her from the aspersions which were afterwards cast upon her !" But why, it may be asked in reply, should not Joseph have thought that no word of God is of private interpretation, and that the story of protecting providence which had made the

<sup>1</sup> Gore, *Dissertations*, p. 28.

Divine scheme plain to himself was meant to be handed on to quiet the doubts and perplexities of men no less God-fearing than himself? And would it not be more to the point if my critic would put us right by giving some other more reasonable account of how this remarkable story came into the hands of the author of the First Gospel?

*The narrative of the Virgin Mother as told by St. Luke.*

In this likewise three questions are in dispute between us. (1) In common with many of our ablest scholars, whose impartiality is above suspicion, I pleaded that the true meaning of the word *πρωτότοκος* should be sought in the tone of the narrative, which is intensely Hebraic throughout, and therefore favours a liturgical rather than a numerical significance. For insisting on this I am dubbed a man of "a highly liturgical mind, who holds fast to phrases and formulas, and cares little to penetrate to the underlying thoughts and facts." But who in this case is more content with the surface of things; the man who says that because a babe is called *the firstborn*, therefore a fifth and sixth is to be expected later, or the one who hears in the word the cry of a devout mother's joy, "I have gotten a man from the Lord; and I must show my gratitude in His own God-appointed way"?

He further reminds me that part of our Lord's work, as of St. Paul after Him, was to do away with the "liturgical values of His time." With regard to which I would say, Yes, so far as our Lord is concerned; but He came *to fulfil, not to destroy*. With regard to St. Paul, my critic forgets that in Dr. Sanday's opinion it is the non-Pauline tone of this narrative which postulates an early pre-Lucan date for it.<sup>1</sup> And generally, I do not see how the mental attitude of a man of thirty years, still less of his disciple twenty years later, could have any bearing whatever on

<sup>1</sup> *Critical Questions*, p. 134.

his mother's choice of words in telling the story of his birth.

(2) My objection that Blessed Mary, under the conditions involved in this theory, could hardly have gone to Jerusalem every year as mentioned by St. Luke, is met in the following terms :—"Of course such a custom does not imply an iron rule which allows no exception. We have a parallel in the story of Hannah. We are told thrice over that she and her husband Elkanah and all his house used to go up yearly to sacrifice at Shiloh ; but we read that Hannah refused to go up during the time (probably three years) which elapsed between the birth and the weaning of Samuel." I agree that we not only have a parallel case, but that probably the story, if not the practice, is designedly fashioned on it ; but I also think that it is by no means favourable to my critic. For how would the rule and exception work out in this case ? A period of nine years intervened between the arrival at Nazareth and the Holy Child's twelfth birthday, during which time four or five children would have been born ; on the lowest computation, therefore, we may safely say that fully six years out of the nine would have necessitated Mary's departure from her rule. Whether this is to be accepted seriously as a gloss on St. Luke's words I will leave Professor Mayor to settle with Sir W. M. Ramsay.

(3) But my critic has an idea that in the story of the Holy Child's first visit to Jerusalem is to be found support for his theory, and he complains that I have passed it by in silence. I must plead guilty to having done so intentionally, for I find it hard to take it seriously. "Is it likely," he asks, "that Mary and Joseph would have been so little solicitous about an only son, and that son the promised Messiah, as to travel for a whole day without taking the pains to ascertain whether He was in their

company or not? If they had several young children to attend to, we can understand that their first thought would have been given to the latter. Otherwise is it conceivable that Mary, however complete her confidence in her eldest son, should have first lost him from her side, and then have allowed so long a time to pass without an effort to find him?" Passing over the partiality with which my critic puts the case before his mind by throwing the fact of the Messiahship into the scale on one side, though I suppose he would not suggest that other children could in any way have affected her belief in the Messiahship of her Son, I would reply that there is no room in the sacred narrative for this circumstantial addition. The story stands complete in itself, telling us quite plainly that unconcern on the mother's part was due to her unquestioning confidence in her Child; and this is in perfect accord with the reposeful character limned with undeviating consistency by the sacred historian, and we are not at liberty to go behind the author's own explanation and say that the actual cause of the child's absence being unobserved for so long was due to maternal neglect incident to the care of a large family. Were I disposed to follow my critic further, I should say that I believe him to be wrong in his facts, for observation teaches that a mother's anxiety over individual children tends to increase with their number; and ordinarily a boy of twelve would in like circumstances take no small share in helping to take care of his younger brothers and sisters. It is, however, sufficient to say that this new explanation smudges out all the poetry from the canvas and gives us a humdrum story for one of the most treasured pictures painted by him

Who first taught Art to fold her hands and pray.

*The incident at Nazareth.* The third main support relied upon is the following passage from the Synoptic



record :—*Is not this the carpenter? the son of Mary? the brother of James and Joses and of Juda and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?* (St. Mark vi. 3; St. Matt. xiii. 54; cf. St. Luke iv. 16 ff.) In common with other supporters of the theory Professor Mayor attaches importance to this exclamation by the Lord's neighbours in His own country, and he goes so far as to say that he takes his "general cue" from it. I am therefore proportionately surprised that he takes no notice of a serious objection which I raised in connexion with its use for evidential purposes. With reference to the word ἀδελφός, I said (p. 83) that "the ambiguity of the word needs to be kept in mind in studying the Synoptic record, not because of the arguments used by St. Jerome, but because of contemporary linguistic limitations. The Aramaic vernacular used at Nazareth had no word to express brother—in our sense of the word—but included a much wider relationship, and certainly covers cousinship." And I explained that for this reason I had abstained from any reference to this passage. As a matter of fact, beyond their mention with Mary, there is nothing in the original expression to indicate their exact relationship. These neighbours speak of certain men and women as being the "home folk," whom they know, but my critic is entirely in the dark as to whether they mean, by the term, brothers or half-brothers or cousins, and it is only after research in other directions that he will be able to come back to these Aramaic records and tell us the precise meaning of the word which we have to translate *brother*.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, if I am not in error on this last point, the main

<sup>1</sup> As I have explained elsewhere, this objection does not, of course, apply to the use of the word on the lips of St. Luke and St. Paul. On the contrary, I consider that *their* use of the word is an argument against St. Jerome's theory.

supports of the Helvidian theory are reduced to the Matthaean and Lucan narratives of the infancy, imbedded in which, as I have shown, incidental statements occur which do much to weaken the first impression made upon the reader, and which my critic has met, at least in my judgment, with singularly unconvincing arguments. I will now pass to the second division of scriptural evidence, and inquire how far this advances the argument in its favour to conclusiveness.

(b) There are three passages which are held to be indirectly corroborative of the positive evidence. In setting myself to review the criticism passed on my treatment of these I find myself at some disadvantage through Professor Mayor having missed the purpose which I had in view. He would have better appreciated my position had he remembered that I had other opponents to deal with besides himself, and would thus, I think, have been able to forgo lengthy discussion on points of secondary importance. In this section of my essay I had specially in mind the extravagant language used about the association of the brethren with the Lord's mother, of which it had been said that we find them "clinging to her in a way we should not expect to find in four stepsons, the youngest <sup>1</sup> of whom must have been well over thirty years of age." I wished to show that the scriptural evidence was devoid of anything to warrant such a fine distinction, while, on the other hand, its general trend was in favour of the impression that the brethren were older than the Lord. This I endeavoured to show by reminding my readers that two of the circumstances—a wedding and a death—are sufficient in themselves to explain their presence, even though they had

<sup>1</sup> This is another careless statement so frequently found with supporters of this theory; the youngest of seven children could not have been thirty years old.

been cousins only; and also by a critical study of the sentences on which my opponent relied. Professor Mayor, overlooking my immediate purpose, is driven to suggest that I was aiming at something entirely foreign to my thought; as, for instance, that I wished to imply that St. John did not think that James and Jude could be rightly called the Lord's brothers; an absurd enough suggestion in view of the attention I give to his later narrative.

*The departure from Cana.* Here, in support of my contention that so far from closely associating them the Evangelist divided his company into two pairs, I ventured to translate with strict literalness, substituting "the brethren" for "his brethren." For this my critic seriously takes me to task; but alas! *Homerus dormitat!* and I hope he will not think me lacking in due courtesy if I say that in this particular instance his Greek is as incorrect as his logic is bad. Surely the rule that "the article in Greek frequently has the force of a possessive pronoun" does not require it to do so in every individual case; nor because *αὐτοῦ* may be supplied from one word to another does it follow that it must do so in the sentence before us. The intelligence of the reader is the arbiter, and the strictures of my critic would have taken a less dictatorial tone had he remembered that here I happen to have the authority of the compilers of the Revised Version behind me in doubting whether the rule should apply:<sup>1</sup> and I think that a slight acquaintance with St. John's style, with his fondness for the unnecessary iteration of pronouns, amply justifies their hesitation. The reference to St. John vii. 3, 4, 10, with its thrice-repeated *αὐτοῦ*, is alone almost sufficient to deter one from inserting it where he has not done so;

<sup>1</sup> Of course in a book for popular use they are right in retaining "his" of the A.V., but by putting it into italics they take the attitude given above. See Preface to R. N. Test., paragraph on use of italics.

and compare St. John xix. 25, ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἡ ἀδελφή τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ. The fact that the brethren were, as I said, in the house does not associate them with the Lord's mother in the close way which I was combating, and Professor Mayor is aware that many doubt whether the brethren were at Cana at all, thinking that the Evangelist, with his "After this," takes up the story again at Nazareth. I will only add, by the way, that he also speaks too confidently about the home being removed to Capernaum. We learn from St. Matthew (iv. 13) that the Lord retired from Nazareth; and from St. Mark, that, as Swete suggests, He probably made St. Peter's house His rendezvous at Capernaum; but, so far as I know, there is not a word in the Gospels about the family removing; and the glimpses we get of them are too slight to enable us to say so, and certainly do not require it.

*The gathering in the Upper Chamber.*<sup>1</sup> Here again there is good reason to question whether the writer meant to associate the brethren in any special way with the Lord's mother. As my critic does not refer to this passage I will repeat that I think his cautious language implies the reverse, *With the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.* This may mean that St. Luke regarded the Lord as the bond between them and His mother, and not the Virgin as the link between Himself and them as their common mother; so, with His removal, the association is modified.

*The attempt to control the Lord's action.*<sup>2</sup> In this single instance we do find the brethren and Blessed Mary acting in close association. And here again I ventured to call attention to a textual variation which would favour my interpretation of the incident. It is true that Westcott

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 14.

<sup>2</sup> St. Mark iii. 31.

and Hort reject the reading in accordance with one of their governing principles, but I think that the last thing they would have wished would be that younger students should accept their decision as final in every detail, but that, on the contrary, they would welcome any particular consideration which might show good cause for deviation from a recognized rule. I wished to do no more than this in suggesting that perhaps the Alexandrine Codex, which reads *the brethren and his mother*, may well deserve attention, since correction to the usual form would be so natural to the copyist. Professor Mayor is, of course, fully justified in saying that my reading is wrong, but he overshoots the mark when he quotes Dr. Swete<sup>1</sup> against me, for, though he too rejects the reading, he agrees with me in his understanding of the passage, saying that "the mother perhaps was over-persuaded by the brethren." And my critic misses the point when he adds that the occurrence of the usual form "His mother and His brethren" later is against me because she, being there, naturally took the first place, and it was for this very reason that the brothers would desire her co-operation. Nor, again, is he accurate in saying that I make no reference to Blessed Mary, and that she is allowed to drop out of the story, for I say that the rebuff to which they subjected themselves "appears to have been conclusive for the Blessed Virgin, for we do not hear of her again in company of the brethren until they, after the Crucifixion, are included in the very company from which they tried to detach him."

But, after all, the question before us here is whether the narrative betrays an attitude on the brethren's part which is unusual for younger brothers to adopt towards an elder brother. Many commentators, entirely unbiassed with regard to the issue before us, think that such is the

<sup>1</sup> Swete, *St. Mark*, in loc.

case, and Professor Mayor endeavours to meet it, but in a way which I think will be nothing short of distressing to many of his readers. It is the occasion, it will be remembered, which called forth the sternest denunciation of all our Lord's severe words, leading Him to speak of the Eternal Sin and its unforgivableness: so terrible indeed were His words that the Evangelist felt constrained to add a word to explain His vehemence, *Because they said he had un unclean spirit (causas tantae irae manifestius expressit, is St. Jerome's comment).*<sup>1</sup> Yet in face of our Lord's own appraisalment of His enemies' conduct and His censure on their words, my critic feels himself at liberty to plead that these religious authorities meant "perhaps little more than 'He is a wild enthusiast, and will soon wear Himself out, unless His friends insist on His taking rest.'"

Apart from the boldness even to temerity of this exegesis, there is a side-light thrown on this incident by St. Luke which is overlooked by my critic and which tells against him, for in the Third Gospel we are told that at this time many women, some of them probably nobly born and certainly wealthy, were joining themselves as disciples of the Lord, *Who ministered to Him of their substance.* I believe that he who wrote "the Gospel for women" means us to see here the underlying meaning of the Virgin's being led to intervene; it was because it was too hard for her to see others allowed to be taking that care of Him which for so long had been her sole privilege, and it was this which led her to comply with the brethren's request to join in their interference.

(c) There remain for review the two passages which incidentally raise serious objections to the theory: (1) the conflict between our Lord and His brethren; and (2) the commendation of the Lord's mother to St. John.

<sup>1</sup> Swete, in loc.

(1) *The conflict between the Lord and His brethren*, St. John vii. 2-8. It was the brethren's unbelief in the Lord's Messianic claims which, according to the Evangelist, gave occasion for the conflict which he narrates, but with this unbelief we have nothing to do here, our sole concern being the attitude which these brothers assume to our Lord, and the light which it throws on the question of their relative age. Consequently Professor Mayor's quotations from Westcott about that unbelief, and his question as to the comparative wrong-doing of these brethren and the sons of Zebedee, are entirely beside the mark. Nothing, indeed, could have been more unfortunate than my critic's reference to Westcott, for on the point at issue he is wholly on my side; his comment being, "Perhaps we may conclude, even from this notice compared with St. Mark iii. 21, 31, that the brethren were elder brethren (i.e., sons of Joseph by a former marriage), who might from their age seek to direct the Lord."<sup>1</sup> So, too, as to the significance of the incident, it is in his eyes the first step in that great controversy of belief and disbelief which is to reach its climax on Calvary; and a disclosure of two opposed principles so antagonistic morally that they *cannot* be reconciled.

Professor Mayor seems to be shocked at the vigour of my language in describing this scene, but I believe not only that my interpretation is correct, but that it does not go beyond St. Chrysostom, who says that their conduct sprang from envy (*ἀπὸ πονηρὰς γνώμης καὶ φθόνου*) and that they were guilty of insolence and unseasonable boldness (*ἡθρασύτης καὶ ἡ ἀκαιρος παρησια*). And so far from forgetting the splendid future of these men, I believe that it is just here that we have the key to it; in this too, if I am not mistaken, having the Greek Commentator with me. I,

<sup>1</sup> Westcott, *St. John*, in loc.

for my part, have never been able to attribute St. James' conversion to his vision of the Risen Lord, but have always associated it with the Crucifixion. I have pictured him standing afar off during the long hours of that dread tragedy, yet rehearsing, and having more vividly before his eyes, this scene in the Nazareth home; *that* personal conflict was the precursor of *this*: it was to this that he had been so ready in his thoughtlessness and impatience to hurry his Brother: it was this that *He* foresaw and for which He was so patiently and quietly preparing Himself. And so at the close I think of him going forth like Peter to weep bitterly, and, like him, needing the Lord's own spoken forgiveness before he could forgive himself for that hour's needless pain. This may be an utterly mistaken view of the saint's conversion, and it certainly is outside our present subject; but perhaps in face of my critic's censure it may be excused as tending to show that I am free from that personal bitterness against these men of which he accuses me, and that I have thought over this matter, if not for so long, at least not less deeply and fully, nor I trust less reverently, than my critic.

But this all-important question of the relative ages of the Lord and His brethren is not, in fact, squarely faced, still less effectually met by Professor Mayor. For instance, he draws similes from home life as it is known to ourselves, never pausing to consider nor to warn his readers of the fundamental divergence of Eastern family life from that which is Western and modern. In nothing is this more marked than in "the attitude of profound respect which is felt by the younger members for the eldest brother, the potential head of the family."<sup>1</sup> These last words are quoted from an article by the Head of the Oxford Mission to Calcutta, who is more experienced than most in his

<sup>1</sup> *Indian Church Quarterly*, April 1900, p. 181.



knowledge of the Eastern mind, and who in connexion with this passage says : " if they had been His younger brothers, the impertinence, to Oriental ideas, would have been most marked." This is the testimony of a man who does not hold the Epiphanian view.

It is much the same when Professor Mayor deals with the question of our Lord's heavenly-mindedness. All would admit that there would be observable in Him an other-worldliness far beyond that of any other man ; that with Him more than any other would companions have need to pause from idle words, conscious that

His heart and brain move there, His feet stay here.

And Professor Mayor rightly insists on this aspect of His person ; but he goes astray when he deduces from this trait that the ordinary consequence of self-neglect would also follow in His case, and I tried to show from the gospel picture that it was not so ; and no wonder, for to do so would be to derogate from the perfection of His sinless manhood. Yet of this objection my critic takes no notice, but, from a page of compressed writing, he picks out two words and directs his criticism against these. Since he considers my choice of words of sufficient interest for discussion I would answer that I am in no way wedded to either word, though I do not think they err from the truth in the way that his view of a self-forgetting idealist does. With regard to his query, " What has clear-sightedness to do with it ? " I may refer him to our Lord's words, *My time is not yet come*, and Westcott's comment—" *καίρὸς* appears to mark the fitness of time in regard to the course of human events"—or, in other words, our Lord claims to be more clear-sighted in the opportuneness of His daily movements than His more practical brother. And though " superiority " looks a lame word apart from its context, I think it fairly

sums up my meaning, and should have been met with an answer rather than an impatient gesture. But I need not insist on this, since my opponent furnishes me with an apt illustration in the reference to Crito and Socrates. It will be remembered that Crito, for all the brave words wherewith he sought to rally the spirit and courage of Socrates, found himself utterly limp just where he thought himself strongest ; and on his own ground had to own that Socrates was the better man. Now this is precisely what I maintained would have been the case between younger brothers and the Lord, but from my critic's point of view the result should be exactly the other way about.

While Professor Mayor dwells on such minor points as these he leaves us in the dark as to what is precisely his own position. In a former work he spoke of this impression of seniority as a difficulty which must be grappled with before the Helvidian theory could be accepted, and it was by way of reply to this that he wrote the paragraph about the positive and relative age of brothers. This implies that he recognizes the fact that such an impression is conveyed to the mind of the reader of the New Testament, but here he seems to deny its existence by centring the whole action around the Lord's mother and laying the whole responsibility on her." Is it more in accordance with human nature," he asks, "that a second wife should be induced by her stepsons to take action against her own firstborn and only child, than that a mother, with several children of her now, should consult with the younger ones when a sudden danger seems to threaten the eldest and dearest ?" I am not concerned to answer a question which I by no means accept as "a parallel case," but simply wish to draw attention to the uncertain position of my critic, who forthwith adds the paragraph referred to above. I hope the indecision is due to qualms of conscience

as to the lawfulness of his exegesis of the passage in question, and the doubt whether, after all, to accuse another of having an unclean spirit can by any manipulation be made to express solicitude for his welfare.

Though of my other three reasons for concluding that the brothers were the elder no mention is made of my belief that the youngest Apostle was the son of James the Lord's brother—(if, that is, we take St. Luke's description with strict exactness)—I am glad to see that there is little to divide us with regard to the others. The words which Professor Mayor quotes from his *Epistle of St. James* about the author's attitude to the *Sermon on the Mount*, and which at the time of writing escaped my memory, excellently describe the position. "It is like the reminiscence of thoughts often uttered by the original speaker and sinking into the heart of the hearer, who reproduces them in his own manner." But I still think that the fact of such evident receptivity on the ethical side of the Lord's teaching in conjunction with an intensely Judaic temper, even after the writer's conversion, postulates, or at least is in favour of, seniority of age in the disciple.

The significance of the literary problem I do not feel at liberty to press. In common with others, I owe such a debt of gratitude to Professor Mayor for his work in this direction that I should deem it unbecoming on my part to challenge his deliberate judgment in the matter. But I think I may without disrespect say two things: first, it is not a question whether the Judaistic tone of these *Epistles* has been "very much exaggerated," but whether it is a distinctive feature, sufficiently marked, to separate them from the rest of the New Testament literature; and, if so, whether a more plausible explanation can be given than that which I suggested; and secondly, I wish Professor Mayor had not given a

reason in the case of the *Epistle of St. Jude* ; for the fact that the last fifth of a letter is intensely Christian constitutes no valid argument that the former four-fifths are not just as emphatically Judaistic if, apart from the concluding part, they so strike the reader. On the contrary (though I tremble to use the word *liturgical* again), we have high authority for saying that the author may have consciously sought to remedy these defects of his letter by finishing with sonorous Christian language which he had borrowed from the liturgical prayers of the Church.<sup>1</sup>

I am sorry that (now for the first time I believe) Professor Mayor, following Edersheim and others, adopts the idea that our Lord's claim to be the Messiah gives support to the Helvidian theory. But the idea of primogeniture nowhere enters into the scriptural conception of the Messiah. That He should be of *the house and lineage of David* was essential to it, but that He should be the firstborn, either in His own person or through a long descent of eldest sons, is no part of the divine revelation. Rather, as always, does this theory introduce a disturbing element into the story. Granting that, by adoption, the Lord became legally Joseph's heir, He was not so in fact ; and to me at least it would seem more agreeable to the Word of God that He who was to be known as the *Truth* should not after His death be found by his younger brothers to have held a position towards them of fraternal authority not strictly His by birthright.

(2) *The commendation of the Lord's mother to St. John.* Here again I think I may fairly complain of Professor Mayor's attitude towards my treatment of this important question. He speaks with words of high scorn of my literary and mental incompetence ; he indulges in *a priori* arguments which ignore essential features of the case ;

<sup>1</sup> *Hastings' Dictionary.* Art. "Ep. of Jude."

but of my argument he deigns not to say a single word. Yet this argument is a very simple one, and ought to have been met if faulty. I tried to demonstrate that, apart from the Helvidian theory, the Gospel narrative is wonderfully simple and holds all together, being of a piece with all the rest in the picture of the Lord's marvellous thoughtfulness and care for all about Him. If the Virgin had no other child, then, on His death, she would be desolate, and her future would in such a case be a care to Him. Again, in such a case, Blessed Mary would naturally have searchings of heart as to her best course : on the one hand there would be the old ties of the Nazareth home with its fond memories, with, too, in all probability, Clopas and Mary and their children still there, a band of disciples only too glad to retain her amongst them : on the other hand there would be the drawing of the affection of her own kith and kin in the persons of Salome and of her nephews James and John, next to herself the nearest and dearest of her Son's friends. It is into such a position as this, which is necessitated by the scriptural story, that the fourth word from the Cross is spoken, so closing His relationship to His mother. Could anything be more in character with all that has gone before ? But the Helvidian theory introduces four younger sons and two or more daughters, and its supporters find themselves called upon to explain them away somehow at this crisis of their mother's life. And how does Professor Mayor seek to do this ? In his former work he said that these children could not rightly hold themselves slighted by the commendation of the Blessed Mary to their cousin because they must have felt " that the busy life of a family was not suited for the quiet pondering which now more than ever would characterize their mother." By way of reply I showed that the argument breaks down completely because James, " the very man who is now maintained to be Blessed Mary's eldest surviving son," was, according to

tradition,<sup>1</sup> the man best able to offer her such a home. I should have thought that the bearing of this was obvious enough; but since my opponent plaintively rejoins that he does not see the point, perhaps the following words from Lightfoot will make my position clearer: "In James, the Lord's brother, . . . we have the prototype of those later saints, whose rigid life and formal dévotion elicits, it may be, only the contempt of the world, but of whom, nevertheless, the world was not and is not worthy."<sup>2</sup>

Now, however, he drops the plea based on the special needs of the mother of the Lord and goes to the other extreme, and says that "we have simply to consider generally what is the duty of sons towards a widowed mother." In reply to this I can only say that, for my part, I can hardly conceive a more hopelessly perverse attitude in approaching this most delicate subject. Leaving aside for the present higher considerations, it invites us to ignore such essential points as the unusual position of dignity accorded to the widowed mother in an Eastern home; it takes no note of the affectionate desires of surviving sons and daughters; it disregards the fact that this is no arrangement come to after consultation with those most concerned, but a wish expressed without any reference to them. It is here especially that my critic accuses me of losing myself in abstractions, so I will try to bring this to a definite issue by starting from his own position. I should, then, like to ask Professor Mayor to imagine an old pupil coming to him in precisely—from a merely human point of view—the same position as he has ascribed to James, the Lord's brother. Such a man could plead that as a family they had been knit together both to each other and to their mother in a special degree through endeavours to protect their eldest brother against himself; but that now, in

<sup>1</sup> Accepted by Dr. Hort, *Judaistic Christianity*, pp. 152, 153.

<sup>2</sup> *Galatians*. St. Paul and the Three.

obedience to his irrevocable wish whispered in his last moments, she felt herself bound to sever herself from their old home in order to live with a cousin who more than anyone else had encouraged him in the course which they had deprecated and which had ended as distressingly as they had all along feared. Can my critic say that with his friend before him seeking his sympathy and advice, he would not feel that it was a hard case and consider that the surviving children were being treated unkindly in the matter? If so, he grants me all I need. If in his conscience there would be any misgiving that the mother and cousin were acting selfishly, he will at last see the point I have been driving at. For what is the actual position? Our Lord stands forth challenging the human conscience to find in His conduct any deviation from the perfection of God's moral law. He stood before the Jews claiming both to fulfil in His own person and to reformulate, and in so doing to elevate to a higher sphere the Mosaic moral code. In no part was there more need of such rehabilitation than in that of filial piety, and in no part of His teaching does the Lord speak with stronger emphasis. It cannot be denied that the natural privilege of children to care for their mother after their father's death was specially prized, yet we are asked to believe that our Lord by His own *fiat* disregarded all this and, so far as His own brothers and sisters are concerned, snapped asunder their tenderest ties. In face of the standard of conduct by which the Lord has bidden the conscience of men to judge Him, I do not flinch from saying that it would not be permissible for Him to act in a manner which I should hold to be unjust in my own elder brother, and of which I know him to be incapable.

Professor Mayor says, "We should all agree that whatever He did was not permissible only, but the one right thing to be done." But that is not the point. The question is whether a condition of things, invented as I believe by

a man in the fourth century, results in the ascription to our Lord of conduct which is irreconcilable with His otherwise faultless claim to show us the ideal of a perfect human life, incomparably beautiful in every detail.

Professor Mayor may quarrel with my words and what he considers my muddled thoughts, but he is as far as ever from meeting this fatal objection to his theory, or of showing his opponents how he can satisfactorily explain a position which in their estimation conflicts with that unapproachable and inviolable moral supremacy which the Lord claims and manifests.

I have now passed in review the criticism of my opponent as regards the passages of Holy Scripture and the reader can judge between us and say which is nearer the mark; the one who finds in these eight passages conclusive evidence that the brethren were the sons of Joseph and Mary: or the other who declares that the more closely they are examined the less do they help the theory—a theory, moreover, which disturbs the smooth tenour of the sacred narrative.

Professor Mayor indulges in a taunt at the nature of the light which I have tried to throw on this question; but he has so often turned aside from the spot which I wished to illumine that I might be tempted to retort that perhaps it has been too bright for him, dazzling his sight and causing him to fall back on nature's kind remedy by closing his eyes. But I will not be so discourteous, but will finish on a more pleasant note, and thank him for the graceful surrender implied in the last word of his title. I am glad that the Helvidian theory claims no longer to sit down in the highest room, but is willing modestly to take its place once more beside its rival as only an alternative *Hypothesis* of what at the best must remain a difficult problem.

I shall hope to review the second part of my critic's article in the following number.