

- of His ministry? What was the response each time?
11. Explain how Jesus could marvel at the unbelief of His townspeople. Did their unbelief surprise Him? If so, how? If not, why not?

SPECIAL STUDY: THE BRETHERN OF THE LORD

What is the real purpose of this study? Is it to discover from an examination of the best evidence available to us, whether the men who are entitled in Scripture "the brethren of the Lord," were real, natural half-brothers of Jesus, being sons of Mary; or whether they were step-brothers, being sons of Joseph by a former wife before espousing Mary; or whether they were cousins, being sons of Alphaeus (or Clopas), Joseph's brother (or else, sons of Mary of Clopas, sister of Mary, Joseph's wife)? Is this research into the semi-obscure facts surrounding the life of our Lord only for academic discussion? What could be gained by a knowledge of the answer to the proposed questions? Beyond mere acquaintance with the facts, are we any richer morally?

Or is it the purpose of such a study to affirm or deny the perpetual virginity of Mary as a dogma affirmed by the Roman Catholic denomination? Even if, after accurate study, one concludes that Mary did, in fact, have no other children after the birth of Jesus, and that the reputed "brethren of the Lord" were, in fact, sons of Joseph by a former wife named Hannah, what is gained for the Catholic position, or what is lost for those who previously objected to the idea (not to say, doctrine or dogma) of the perpetual virginity of Mary?

Or is the question even correctly put in that fashion? Could we not ask ourselves, what USE is to be made of the supposed perpetual virginity? What is the FUNCTION of such a pretended fact?

So the importance or value of this study does not lie so much in enriching our information about the private life and relations of Jesus, as in dealing with the Catholic apologists who would elevate Mary to a superhuman plane. To do this they must demonstrate three fundamental propositions, one of which this study touches directly:

1. "Mary was herself conceived without sin," or the dogma of the immaculate conception;

2. "Mary remained virgin throughout her married life," or the dogma of perpetual virginity;
3. "Mary is an object of special veneration," or the dogma of her special status in heaven whereby she is supposed to be accorded particular devotion. This last step in her exaltation involves the following unproven assumptions: (Cf. *I.S.B.E.*, 2003)
 - a. Christ's perpetual humanity (something else to prove) presumes His perpetual Sonship to Mary, as argument which implies that the glorified Lord Jesus is still subject to His mother.
 - b. Christ hears her prayers, hence she is an intercessor through whom prayers may be addressed to Jesus.
 - c. Since Mary cared for the body of Christ when He was on earth, naturally, His spiritually body, the Church, would be her special care in heaven.

Even if it were possible to establish as fact that every Church Father who supported the perpetual virginity of Mary had no ulterior theory to defend by that stand, in which case each may be regarded as trustworthy to transmit no more than simple, historical fact, and even if it were possible to establish on purely logical and exegetical grounds from the Scriptures that both Mary AND Joseph remained virgins in their marriage relationship, still much stands or falls in relationship to the moral implications drawn therefrom by the modern Christian, some of which are:

1. The medieval conception, not yet fully clarified or changed by those whose denomination officially tolerated it, of the intrinsic sinfulness of the desire for marital relations and the act by which that desire is realized. (Contrast 1 Ti. 4:3, 4; Heb. 13:4) Marriage, though a holy sacrament for many, must yet be viewed by them as inferior to celibacy and incompatible with holy living in its highest, purest sense. This conclusion must necessarily follow and certainly was the view of many, however contradictory both to Scripture and to logic. For, if, "Mary was married to Joseph and Joseph to Mary in *appearance* only, then they were recreant to each other and to the ordinance of God which made them one." (*I.S.B.E.*, 2003)
2. Must the ancient "repugnance to Christian feeling to think of the womb of Mary, in which the Word, made flesh, had dwelt in a peculiar way, as the habitation of other babes," (*I.S.B.E.*, 520) express also the sentiments of the modern Christian?
3. Must the modern Christian share the view "that Mary is not to be

considered a human being under the ordinary obligations of human life," (*I.S.B.E.*, 2003), "removed from the sphere of ordinary life and duties as too commonplace for one who is to be surrounded with the halo of a demi-god, and to be idealized in order to be worshipped"? (*I.S.B.E.*, 520)

4. Must the Scriptures continue to be mishandled in order to support an unjustifiable theory of celibacy, an unbased theory of Joseph's virginity, a distorted view of marriage and an inadequate understanding of the family? Even if it were logically conceded that Joseph and Mary chose, for whatever reasons, to abstain from marital relations after the birth of Jesus, and even if the brethren of the Lord are logically conceded to be the sons of any other woman than Mary, it is not right that Biblical texts be distorted to prove it.

It is too apparent that the presumption of perpetual virginity for Mary is an important link in her exaltation without sin to be an object of worship in her function as mediatrix, just as much as the dogma of her immaculate conception (her being born sinless so as not to transmit inherited original sin to Jesus) and the almost forgotten but necessary assumption of her immaculate life. But whatever may be the eventual use of the particular information regarding the "brethren of the Lord," the evidence for this link in the chain of Mariolatry, which binds the conscience of millions of people for whom Christ died, is as weak as any of the others.

WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE?

As will be seen, the main interpretations of "the brethren of the Lord" have been three: the "cousin" theory, the "step-brother" theory and the "half brother" view. (For fuller exposition of these views and their relative literature, see *I.S.B.E.* and other encyclopedic articles on "the brethren of the Lord," on the individual names of the four brothers, on Mary, on virginity and similar topics. See especially J.B. Lightfoot's commentary on Galatians, pp. 252-291. For much of the following material, I am indebted to Lightfoot's collection of evidence, however much I may disagree with his choice of conclusion.

The basic problems involved in the identification of "the Lord's brethren" turns upon the following considerations:

1. The identification of Clopas (or Cleophas): was he the same man as Alphaeus, father of the Apostle, James of Alphaeus? Was Clopas the brother of Joseph, foster father of Jesus? Are Judas Thaddaeus or Simon the Zealot, or both, sons of this Alphaeus-Clopas?
2. Is Mary of Clopas to be identified with the Mary mother of James and Josés, hence also mother of Simon (or Simeon) Zelotes and Judas Thaddaeus? Is this Mary to be identified as the sister of Jesus' mother?
3. Is Jesus' mother's sister to be identified with the wife of Zebedee and with Salome?

In order better to see the relative connections the following charts are offered:

Chart 1: WOMEN AT THE CROSS. <i>Question marks indicate doubt about the identification.</i>			
	Mt. 27:56	Mk. 15:40	Jn. 19:25 (rearranged)
1.	Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene
2.	Mary, mother of James and Josés	Mary, mother of James the Little and Josés	Mary of Clopas (?)
3.	_____, mother of Zebedee's sons	Salome (?)	_____, Jesus' mother's sister (?)
4.	_____	_____	_____, Jesus' mother

The identification of these women depends upon the certainty of several probabilities:

1. It is unlikely that in Jn. 19:25 the phrase "Jesus' mother's sister" is to be taken as in apposition with "Mary of Clopas," making John list only three women at the cross, since he is actually listing two pairs of women. This is shown in two ways:
 - a. He links the first two and the last two by the conjunction "and," almost, as if to indicate a separation of some sort between the two pairs.
 - b. John's well-known habit throughout his gospel of suppressing the names of himself and his relatives may be evident here, since it may be presumed that Mary Magdalene and Mary of Clopas were not relatives of John, whereas if this identification suggested above proves valid, then Mary, Jesus' mother, and Salome, John's mother, would be sisters. For this reason John leaves both women nameless, identifying them only by a descriptive phrase.
2. It is likely that John's mother is to be equated with "Jesus. Mother's sister," since John's mother was certainly at the cross and it does not seem likely that John would have omitted her.

3. Both Salome and Jesus' mother's sister remain otherwise totally unidentified and unidentifiable to the modern reader of the text, unless they are otherwise to be identified with the also unnamed mother of Zebedee's sons. This is not impossible, since "Salome" would be her name, "mother of Zebedee's sons" gives her relationship to the Apostles, and "Jesus' mother's sister" identifies her connection with Jesus and His mother.

One result of this theory, of course, is that Jesus is seen as a cousin of James and John, a theory which may also account for the definite intimacy these two enjoyed with the Lord, as well as provide a reason why Jesus consigned His mother over to John the Apostle, His cousin.

Chart 2: LISTS OF THE APOSTLES INVOLVED IN THIS QUESTION

Mt. 10:2-4

Mk. 3:13-19

Lk. 6:12-16

Ac. 1:13

----- 9. James of Alphaeus 10. Thaddaeus 11. Simon the Cananean 12. Judas Iscariot	----- James of Alphaeus Thaddaeus Simon the Cananean Judas Iscariot	----- James of Alphaeus Simon the Zealot Judas of James Judas Iscariot	----- James of Alphaeus Simon the Zealot Judas of James -----
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For a full list of the Twelve, see notes on 10:2-4.

In this chart several items are to be noted:

1. James of Alphaeus is always the principle name leading this third group of Apostles, even as Peter's always leads the first group and Philip's the second. Judas' Iscariot's name always concludes this third group, except in Acts where his suicide is already an accomplished fact, hence the omission in the fourth list.
2. The remaining two names, though reversed in the last two lists, remain together as if bound together by some unmentioned tie.
3. The identification of Thaddaeus with Judas of James is discussed under Mt. 10:2-4; so also the names "Cananean" and "Zealot."
4. The intriguing question to be solved is which James is intended in the descriptive "Judas of James." Is Judas the *brother* of the son of Alphaeus? Or is he the *son* of another unknown James?

With these crude, rudimentary tools in hand, let us examine the evidence for each view.

THE COUSIN THEORY

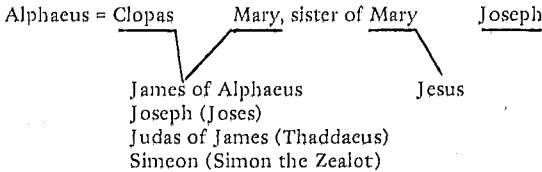
The great Jerome propounded the theory which has gained currency among Catholic commentators that "the brethren of the Lord" are, in reality, His cousins. Others have noticed certain points necessary

to sustain this suggestion and so have added features unknown to Jerome but were essential to the theory. The theory is based upon the following points:

1. James, son of Alphaeus, is thought to be the Lord's brother, James.
2. Alphaeus, the father of James, is supposedly to be identified linguistically with Clopas (or Cleophas), since *Alphaios* is the Greek equivalent of the Aramean *Chalphai*. (On this, see Lightfoot's learned discussion, pp. 256f and footnotes, 267f.)
3. The term "James the Less," seemingly, implies only one other eminent man among the Apostolic band known by the name of James, i.e., James of Zebedee. Therefore, James of Alphaeus would be also James the Less, son of Mary, whose brother's name is Joses (or, Joseph), a name also found in the list of "the brethren of the Lord."
4. According to the theory, Mary of Clopas is said to be the wife of Alphaeus, hence, mother of James of Alphaeus.
5. Mary of Clopas (Alphaeus), being the mother of James, is said to be sister of Jesus' mother.
6. The result of this theory, that James the Lord's "brother" is really the Lord's cousin, is also based upon the loose Aramaic use of the word "brother" in Scripture for: actual brotherhood, common nationality, wider kinsmanship or only friendship or sympathy.
7. Due to the testimony of Hegesippus (cited by Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* iii, 20), some add also "Judas of James," considering him to be *brother* of James the Lord's brother, and perhaps Simon the Zealot as well, since these three names are kept together in the list of the Apostles. Not only are the Lord's "brethren" to be thought of as His "cousins," but some, if not all, of His brothers are also Apostles, according to the theory.
8. The theory presupposes also the death or incapacitation of Alphaeus (= Clopas) the putative father of these four men, as well as the inability of Mary ("of Clopas") to care for them, in which case they must have been practically raised in the house of Joseph and Mary in whose company they are often seen. (Cf. Jn. 2:12; Mt. 12:46 and par.) The Nazarenes consider these "brethren" to be as much a part of the family of Joseph and Mary as Jesus or His sisters. (Mt. 13:54-58)

Perhaps it would help to visualize the view of Jerome as it was adapted by its adherents:

Chart 3: THE COUSIN THEORY



Objections to this theory are hardly less numerous than the points on which it is founded:

1. While it may be granted that in Hebrew or Aramaic the word "brother" must do service for a wider range of relationships, it would be unnatural for the Evangelists who left their works for us in Greek to have failed to specify the exact relationship intended, especially since in Greek the words are available for *cousin* (*anepsibōs*, Col. 4:10) and *kinsman* (*suggenēs*, Lk. 1:36; 2:44; 21:16; Mk. 6:4). Surely the very Evangelists who describe the other most intimate facts about the relationships of people in the Lord's family would not have failed to be reasonably specific about this point, avoiding those expressions which are ambiguous at least, and might be understood as implying that these men were half brothers through Mary.
2. Another serious objection to the Cousin Theory is its presumption that at least two (i.e., James of Alphaeus and Judas [brother] of James), if not three (including Simon the Zealot), of the Lord's brethren were Apostles, a conclusion inconsistent with the Apostle John's declaration (7:5) that as late as six months before Jesus' death: "even his brothers did not believe in him." Could John say this of two or three out of four "brothers," if those who did not believe were supposedly Apostles? Instead, the "brethren" are clearly distinguished from the Apostles. (Cf. Ac. 1:14; 1 Co. 9:5, Cephas' name being distinguished in this latter passage only for special emphasis, not as being separate from the Apostles' group just mentioned.) Judas of James (Jude 1:1, 17) only seems to disclaim being an Apostle, since Peter speaks the same way (2 Pt. 3:2). However, this latter part of the argument would not be conclusive.

3. The expression, "James the *Less*," implies only two of the name James, one of which is distinguished from the other by this epithet. But Mark (15:40) wrote: "James the Small, Little or Young," not "the *Less*." (*Iakòbou toû mikroû*, not *mikrotérou*) So the descriptive title usually translated as an adjective of comparative degree, which generally speaks of only two between which the comparison is made, turns out to be one of positive degree. That it certainly denotes some standard of comparison, without which it would make no sense, cannot be doubted, but that that standard has to be one, and only one other, James (and not rather two or three others) must be questioned. Besides, there might be some long-forgotten reason in the domestic life of James the Less that dubbed him with that distinctive title that even in adult life he could not shake off. (Cf. the diminutive ending on "Jimmy," or even "Jim" for James, used as names for grown men. Also, "James the Less" may have been a very tall man, earning him the humorous label "Little Jimmy.") So it may well be that the expression, "the *Less*," relates the James to no other James at all, but refers, rather, to some other point of comparison. Even if the comparison is with others by the name of James, these cannot be limited in number to only one other, as Jerome's theory demands.
4. According to the theory, "Jude . . . of James" is considered as the "brother," instead of *son*, of James, an interpretation which, according to Lightfoot (*Galatians*, 253), is not the proper word to be supplied in the ellipsis. It also goes against early translations which use *son*. Had these two men been brothers, it is probable that Luke would have written "James of Alphaeus and Jude his brother," or else, "James and Judas, sons of Alphaeus," as in the case of the other pairs of brothers. Also in the Apostolic lists of Luke (6:16 and Ac. 1:13), Simon the Zealot interrupts this supposed brotherhood, for, if he were not a brother, why insert his name here? If Simon too were a brother, as some adherents of this theory claim, why call only Judas "of James" and not Simon too? Further, neither Matthew nor Mark, who actually mention Thaddaeus (presumably the same as Judas of James) immediately following James of Alphaeus, show any evidence of connecting Thaddaeus with James of Alphaeus. Finally, Lightfoot remarks that since this Judas is described in so many different ways ("Thaddaeus," "of James" and "not Iscariot," Jn. 14:22), were he really the Lord's brother, as this theory supposes, it would not be thought possible that he could, in all these instances, have escaped being

described in that way, when that one designation would have immediately identified the man meant by the authors.

Of course, it must be admitted in reference to Simon the Zealot that the fact that he is not designated also as "of James," is not conclusive, since he is uniformly labelled "the Zealot = the Cananaean." This appellation distinguishes him at once from Simon Peter and, at the same time, indicates his background. Both are sufficient reasons perhaps to override the necessity to mark him as brother of James of Alphaeus and Judas of James. So the "interruption" mentioned above would not in itself be fatal to this part of the theory.

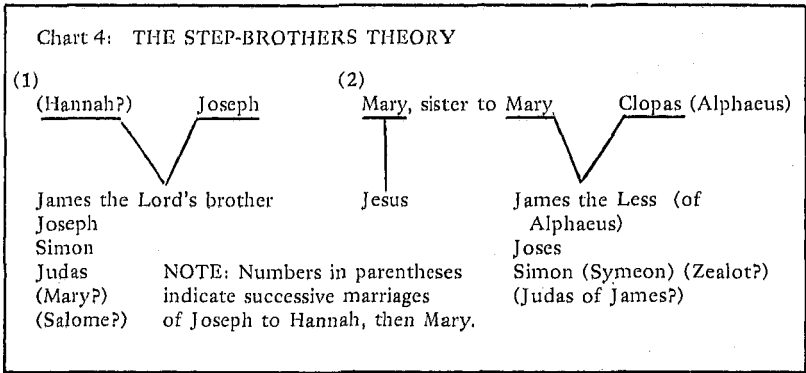
5. Another significant improbability to be noted in the Cousin Theory is the presupposition that there were two Marys in the same family: Mary of Joseph and Mary of Clopas. (Jn. 19:25, see Chart 1) The problem rests in the decision whether the expression "Mary of Clopas" is to be taken as in apposition with the descriptive: "Jesus' mother's sister," and not rather as naming another woman. The reasons offered for taking the two expressions as designating two separate women are:
 - a. It is at least reasonably improbable that two sisters should have borne the same name. Among near kin, such a practice would not be so improbable as its use in the same household for blood sisters.
 - b. John 19:25 seems to separate the four women into two pairs each by his use of conjunctions.
 - c. Lightfoot (*ibid.*, 264) puts emphasis on the rendering of the Peshito Syriac which inserts a conjunction between the two names: "his mother's sister, *and* Mary of Cleophas . . ." He says, "It is not unlikely that a tradition underlies the Peshito rendering." (*ibid.*, 264)
6. Regardless of the linguistic relationships between the Aramaic name "Cleophas" (*Chalphai*) or "Clopas," and the Greek name "Alphaeus," (*Alphaios*), let it be remembered that perfect identification of names still does not prove identity of persons.
7. Jesus' brothers are mentioned in the Gospels in connection with Joseph and Mary, Jesus' reputed father and real mother, never with Mary of Clopas, the presumed wife of Alphaeus-Clopas. (Mt. 12:46; 13:55 and parallels) Further, these "cousins" real mother, Mary of Clopas, was very much alive even until Jesus' crucifixion. (See Chart 1: Jn. 19:25.) Why she could not have raised these boys, instead of Joseph and Mary is, of course, unknown

to us, but is it likely that the Nazarenes should have described them as Jesus' "brethren," in the same sense that they supposed Him to be Joseph's "son," Mary to be His "mother," and the girls in that family to be His "sisters"? Their argument, intended to account for the humanness of Jesus, implies the quite ordinari-ness of these relations. (See on Mt. 13:54-58.)

THE STEP-BROTHER THEORY

This understanding of the matter sees the brethren of the Lord as sons of Joseph by a former wife before marrying Mary. Having, as it does, the advantage of the support of the large majority of the Church Fathers would seem to give this explanation additional importance, since that fact alone would seem to signify that a nearly unanimous opinion on the subject was shared by the very men most able to testify on the subject. Various, interesting bits of "information" are supplied by those Fathers who happened to write on the subject, as, for instance, the names of Jesus' sisters (Mary and Salome, according to Epiphanius in his treatise against Heresies), the name of Joseph's former wife (Hannah, or Anna, according to Eusebius, *On the Star*) or that Joseph was at least eighty years old or past when he married Mary (Epiphanius, *Protevangelium Jacobi*). Without pretending to pronounce upon the worth of each testimony of the Fathers, a task well beyond my competence, I might just observe that the support by a large majority of the Church Fathers does not necessarily argue the validity of the view. It may only demonstrate how widespread the error was believed and handed on. So, like any evidence received from the Fathers which must be tested by the revelation they purport to explain, so this theory of theirs must face the same fire, despite the fact that some of them write as if they thought to be giving testimony to fact, not theory.

This explanation may be represented graphically as follows:



Support for this theory is not so much exegetical or logical as it is traditional, i.e., based upon citations from the Fathers, who are themselves debating the issue.

The question, then, must be resolved in the same way the Fathers themselves tried to deal with it, i.e., by debating the relative points in the argument. While it seemed to Lightfoot, and certainly to others, that certain of the more informed Fathers were giving testimony to facts against which the appeal of logic or exegesis of Scripture would have no force, yet the Fathers themselves, if the citations brought forward by Lightfoot are typical examples, do not affirm the antiquity of their opinions on the basis of undoubted, uninterrupted tradition. Or, if some of them seem to do this, others of the same periods do not let this hinder their own independent investigation of the case. Although the great Jerome ultimately seems to have relinquished his position, yet at the close of the fourth century in his commentary on Matthew (398 A.D.) he does not seem to consider the question closed on the basis of traditional authority. Rather "he taunts those who considered the Lord's brethren to be the sons of Joseph by a former wife with 'following the ravings of the apocryphal writings and inventing a wretched creature . . . Meicha or Escha by name.'" (Lightfoot, 260) This state of affairs in the Fathers leaves us freer to consider the bad logic or bad exegesis involved in the problem and freer to come to our own conclusions.

The advantage of this position over the Cousin Theory is immediately apparent in that this theory takes the word "brother" seriously, giving to it a more natural meaning. These step-brothers

can be called “brothers” in the same sense in which Joseph is called Jesus’ “father” (Lk. 2:33, 41, 43), even by Mary who knew the facts best. (Lk. 2:48) This view also takes better account of the fundamental Gospel description of the Lord’s brothers as unbelievers distinct from the Apostles. It also connects them better with Joseph and Mary, instead of bringing them in from a completely different family.

However, several objections appear at once to this theory:

1. The “Step-brothers Theory” makes Joseph a very old man, assuming for him a previous marriage, a supposition nowhere alluded to in the canonical Gospels. The argument usually offered for Joseph’s advanced age, on the basis of the NT Gospels, is these books’ silence regarding the man after his appearance in the narrative of Jesus at age twelve in the Temple. (Lk. 2:41-51) From this silence it is usually presumed that he passed permanently out of the picture by death. But this very silence, offered as Biblical evidence for the advanced age of Joseph (ignoring for sake of the argument the traditions in the *Protevangelium Jacobi* and in Epiphanius), is perfectly consonant with the possibility that Joseph was killed or died a natural death while relatively young. So, silence proves nothing certain about the age of Joseph.

But granted for sake of argument that Joseph actually did die shortly after Jesus was twelve years old, this still means that Joseph lived as husband with Mary for twelve years. One of the incredible results of this fact, if the perpetual virginity of Mary be true, is that, if Joseph dwelt with Mary for twelve years yet keeping her a virgin until the day of his own death, then Joseph must be seen to have made a solemn renunciation of his own marriage rights. As far as Mary was concerned, and as far as Joseph in his new relation with her was concerned, he was virtually a virgin too. Were it possible to demonstrate categorically that the Lord’s brethren were His cousins or His step-brothers, yet the words of Sweet (*I.S.B.E.*, 2003) would still ring with devastating truth: “That a married woman has no children is no proof of virginity—perpetual or otherwise.” The idea of Mary’s perpetual virginity demands, by the nature of the marriage relationship, the continued abstinence from marital relations with his wife on the part of Joseph, dating at least from the time of his marriage to Mary until his death.

Further granted for sake of argument that Joseph were eighty when he married Mary and died when Jesus was twelve years old,

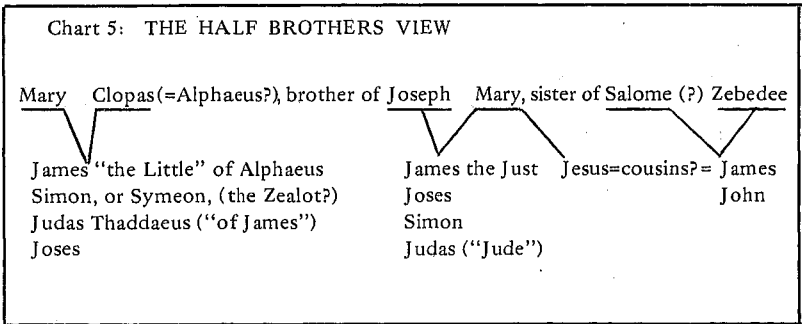
- let it not be supposed that he COULD NOT have begotten by Mary at least six children before his death. Neither the birth of Isaac (Gen. 21:1-3) nor that of John the Baptist (Lk. 1:5-24, 57-67) are ever thought of as miraculous (i.e., supernatural) conceptions, even though they were born of extremely old parents, a fact which makes the births marvellous indeed, but that fact alone would not necessitate their being considered as being supernaturally conceived. Had they been supernatural, then the astonishing, supernatural conception of Jesus would not have been at all unique.
2. Another objection that should be raised to this theory is the fact that, had these "brothers" been sons of Joseph by a former wife before he espoused Mary, then the oldest of these brothers would surely have been regarded as legal heir to Joseph, hence to the throne of David. Jesus would not be the legal heir of Joseph, as attested by the genealogies of Matthew (1:1-17, on which see notes, Vol. I) and of Luke (3:23-38), since Jesus, in such a case, would be but the youngest of five legal sons of Joseph. While it is true that these very genealogies of Jesus do not always follow the direct line of descent from father to his firstborn son, due to deaths, adoptions, etc., yet the generally established rule is to follow this direct succession, unless there be some well-known, overriding factor that prohibits this. But in the Gospel there is no such fact that would justify the passing over four older sons of Joseph merely in order to consider Jesus as the legal heir of Joseph, unless that were His rightful position because of His real primogeniture.
 3. While the argument from silence can never be conclusive, yet the ancient authors, who are cited as being of the opinion that "the Lord's brethren are elder sons of Joseph by another wife before his espousal to Mary," do not take adequate account of the Scriptures' silence regarding their (supposed) existence from before the birth of Jesus until their actual appearance in the narrative. That is, where were those supposed sons of Joseph while he took Mary to Bethlehem for the census? Where were they during the flight into Egypt? Until Joseph brought the family back to Nazareth? That is, unless the testimony of Eusebius ("On the Star") be so construed, which says, "Joseph and Mary and Our Lord with them and the five sons of Hannah (Anna) the first wife of Joseph." Supposedly, the account from which this passage is taken professes to be founded on a document dating A.D. 119. (See Lightfoot, *ibid.* 283, footnote 1.) The usual assumption of the Fathers, who lean heavily upon the apocryphal gospels for

their proof of the existence of these sons of Joseph prior to Jesus' birth, is that the Gospel silence is to be interpreted as suggesting that either the brethren were present on the occasions mentioned above but escaped mention by the Evangelists because of the relative unimportance of their place in the history at that point. Or, it must be assumed that they were left at home in Nazareth, being grown up enough to care for themselves during Joseph's absence. Let it be remembered, however, that this same silence of the Evangelists is just as fully capable of being interpreted to mean that these "brethren of the Lord" had not yet been born!

THE HALF BROTHERS VIEW

This view, in the words of Lightfoot (*Galatians*, 253), is "that the obvious meaning of the term ("brethren") was the correct meaning, and that these brethren were the Lord's brethren as truly as Mary was the Lord's mother, being her sons by her husband Joseph." Though each detail in connection with the protagonists of this question, when considered individually, "might with some difficulty be explained otherwise, the force of the argument is cumulative. There are too many items to be explained away, in order to establish any other inference" than that these people were half brothers of Jesus. (*I.S.B.E.*, 519)

This view may be diagrammed as follows:



Some of the points in the chart depend upon factors already discussed, such as the identification of Mary of Clopas with Mary the mother of James and Joses (see Chart 1), the identification of the Apostles

James, Simon and Judas (Chart 2 and notes under the Cousin Theory), as well as the linguistical identification of Alphaeus with Cleophas (or Clopas), hence enjoy the strengths or suffer the weaknesses of the position of these factors in the other theories.

There are, however, several new items that are derived, rightly or not, from the testimony of Hegesippus, a Hebrew Christian of Palestine living around 160 A.D. Though the testimony was cited by Lightfoot as tending to support the Step-brothers Theory, rather than the Half Brother View, since Eusebius and Epiphanius who quote Hegesippus take former view of the question, yet the objective facts which Hegesippus mentions are susceptible of another interpretation:

After the martyrdom of James the Just on the same charge as the Lord, his paternal uncle's child Symeon the son of Clopas is next made bishop, who was put forward by all as the second in succession, being cousin of the Lord. (Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, iv. 22)

They say he (Simeon the son of Cleophas) was the cousin german of our Saviour, for Hegesippus asserts that Cleophas was the brother of Joseph. (Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, iii, 11)

In another place (iii, 32), Eusebius cites Hegesippus' testimony to the same effect. Now, the question arises whether it is legitimate to reject out of hand the contrary testimony of the Fathers on one view and appeal to agreeable testimony for another view. It will be noticed, however, that appeal is not made here to direct testimony on the perpetual virginity of Mary or upon the relation of the brothers to Jesus, even though Hegesippus' witness contains also notice of this latter fact. Rather, the testimony is brought forward to notice the connection of Cleophas and Joseph, a relationship that, while not directly material for the controversy, yet provides a link in an otherwise incomplete chain. Eusebius himself quotes this testimony no less than three separate times as if he had no doubt about its authenticity even though he himself lived about 180 years later.

Weaknesses of this theory of the relationships immediately arise:

1. The identification of Clopas with Alphaeus, which itself, in turn, is dependent upon the following considerations: (*J.S.B.E.*, 106)
 - a. That Mary of Clopas is the same as Mary, mother of James the Less and Joses. (See Chart 1.) Impossible to prove or disprove.
 - b. That James the Less and James of Alphaeus are the same person.

- Though this is impossible to demonstrate absolutely, this identification is the absolutely necessary key to solve the problem.
- c. That Clopas and Alphaeus are different variations of a common name, variations arising out of varying approximation in Greek of an Aramaic name. Competent scholars stand both for and against this identification. But, as noted before, certain linguistic identification of the two names would never prove identification of persons.
 - d. That Clopas (or Alphaeus) was known by two names, a hypothesis not unlikely, considering the practice of that period. Unfortunately, there is no evidence to demonstrate whether he too followed this usage.
2. Also the supposition that we have correctly identified the sons of Clopas (Alphaeus?) and Mary as being James and Joses (Mt. 27:56; Mk. 15:40), Simon (Hegesippus, cited above) and Judas "of James" (or Thaddaeus). While it would seem that three out of four of these cousins of the Lord are to be numbered among the Apostles, yet the tenuous identifications are impossible to prove:
- a. While Simon of Clopas is described by Hegesippus as "the Lord's cousin," this seems to weigh against his being the same as Simon the Zealot, the Apostle, else would not Hegesippus have found it easier so to describe him? Further, Hegesippus' remark (*Eccl. Hist.* iii, 11) is found in a context where the Apostles, brethren and disciples of the Lord gather to seek a worthy successor to James, bishop of Jerusalem. Considering the particular mission of the Apostles, it would be hardly likely that an Apostle, Simon the Zealot, were he to be identified with Simon of Clopas, should have been selected to fill the episcopal office.
 - b. The likelihood of Judas' being the *brother* of, rather than the *son* of, James, has already been noticed. (See objection 4 under the Cousin Theory.) Yet, if the writer of the Epistle of Jude is the same man as "Judas of James," the identification of that "Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James" (Jude 1) is reasonably assured. Unfortunately, the very fact that the name "James" was so common, reduces our certainty that the very James to whom he was brother is also James of Alphaeus.

At this point it is worthwhile to examine the objections Lightfoot (*ibid.* 270ff) offers to the Half Brother View:

3. Without stating it clearly, Lightfoot seems to suggest that since Joseph disappears from the record after Jesus' visit to the Temple

at age 12; therefore Joseph died. Hence, Mary naturally appears alone with Jesus' brethren. Lightfoot suggests (but does not state) the conclusion that Joseph could not have begotten at least six children in these twelve years. If so, this is patently impossible to prove, since Mary and Joseph could have had one baby every other year, all born after Jesus.

4. It is objected also that the perpetual virginity of Mary is not hindered by certain expressions thought to deny it:

a. According to Lightfoot, the expression "he knew her not until" (Mt. 1:25) does not imply normal marital relations after the birth of Jesus. But this is manifestly false in light of the following considerations:

(1) The very fact that Matthew made any declaration at all, short of saying, "He knew her not until her death," suggests quite the opposite interpretation. Had the Apostle Matthew considered the perpetual virginity of Mary to be so important as later to be recognized as dogma, he could not have expressed the critical information upon which the dogma depends in more equivocal or compromising language.

(2) It is often argued by defenders of the perpetual virginity myth that the Evangelist, whose purpose in this chapter (Mt. 1:25) is to bring out the supernatural birth of Jesus, clearly affirms the virginity of Mary up to the moment of birth; what occurred after that, and that which comes to us through tradition, lies outside of his present perspective. In an excellent discussion of the critical word "until" (*héos hoú*) Fausto Salvoni (*Sesso e amore nella Bibbia*) brings forward cogent reasons why the word "until" actually does deal with, or speak clearly about, that period which follows the time limited by "until." It has been thought useful, therefore, to include in summary form Salvoni's argument at the conclusion of this study.

b. As Lightfoot rightly points out, some have mistakenly supposed that Luke's (2:7) expression, "She gave birth to her first-born son," implied a "second-born" and so further. However, "first-born" to the Jewish mind had special significance. (Cf. Lk. 2:22-24) The first-born belonged to the Lord in a special way that was not true of the "second-born," or of other children born later. The term "first-born" refers, then, to a position based upon order of birth, it is true, but does not necessitate other births.

5. "Woman, behold thy son." (Jn. 19:26, 27) is thought by Lightfoot to be most devastating to the Half Brothers View, for this phrase seems to indicate that Mary did not have four grown sons who should care for her so well as John the disciple. Lightfoot argues (*ibid.* 272):

Is it conceivable that our Lord would thus have snapped assunder the most sacred ties of natural affection? The difficulty is not met by the fact that her own sons were still unbelievers. This fact would scarcely have been allowed to override the paramount duties of filial piety. But even when so explained, what does this hypothesis require us to believe? Though within a few days a special appearance is vouchsafed to one of those brethren, who is destined to rule the mother Church of Jerusalem, and all alike are converted to the faith of Christ; yet she, their mother, living in the same city and joining with them in a common worship (Acts 1:14) is consigned to the care of a stranger of whose house she becomes henceforth the inmate.

But Lightfoot's rejection of the Half Brothers theory is ungrounded in light of the following considerations:

- a. The supposed "unnaturalness" of Jesus' action on the cross in consigning His mother to John, were there other sons of Mary to whom He might have given her, is not formidable against His placing her in the hands of John. As a matter of fact, no one knows exactly WHERE those brothers were at that moment, just before Jesus died. Some "unknown domestic circumstance may explain the omission of her sons." (*I.S.B.E.*, 520) If, for any reason whatever, those sons of Mary were not present at the cross, Jesus COULD NOT have consigned her care to them, even had He wanted to, unless by delegation.
- b. But the very assumption by those who argue against the Half Brothers Theory on the view that these men were older sons of Joseph by a former marriage, falls at this very point. Their assumption fails to take into account the fact that Jesus, according to their theory, turns out to be the YOUNGEST of five sons in the legal family of Joseph. Hence, Jesus does not have the right to turn His mother over to anyone! That right belongs to the oldest brother, not to Jesus. If appeal is made in this discussion to Jewish custom, neither Jesus' authority nor the special circumstances under which Jesus made the statement

can have anything to do with the question. On the other hand, Jesus' action on the cross, delivering Mary into John's care, is perfectly harmonious with the view that He consistently maintained the position and performed the duties of the eldest son throughout His earthly life. "Jesus could hand over His sacred charge to the trustworthy keeping of another, because He had faithfully maintained it Himself." (*J.S.B.E.*, 2002)

Some may take exception to this view that the picture seen of Jesus in the Gospels is that of His playing the part of the eldest son, by objecting, "But does not the interference of His mother and brothers with Jesus' ministry (Mt. 12:46ff; Mk. 3:31ff; Lk. 8:19ff; cf. Mk. 3:19b-21) presuppose a superiority? This attitude of superiority is quite inconsistent with the position of younger brothers, according to Jewish customs." Jacobs (*JSBE*, 520) answers, "Those who pursue an unjustifiable course are not models of consistency."

- c. True, the mere supposition that Mary's own sons were still unbelievers, by itself, would not be completely convincing, since it was Jesus' intention to make a special appearance to James (1 Co. 15:7) who was to become such an important leader in the early Church (Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12; Ac. 15). Yet, conceding all this, it must still be repeated, they were yet unbelievers. Even Lightfoot himself admits the force of this fact: (*ibid.* 265)

A very short time before the Lord's death His brethren refuse to accept His mission: they are still unbelievers. Immediately after His ascension we find them gathered together with the Apostles, evidently recognizing Him as their Master. Whence comes this change? Surely the crucifixion of one who professed to be the Messiah was not likely to bring it about. He had claimed to be King of Israel and He had been condemned as a malefactor: He had promised His followers a triumph and He had left them persecution. Would not all this confirm rather than dissipate their former unbelief?

Lightfoot believes with us that only the post-resurrection appearances would have been sufficient to produce the great turning point in the religious life of Jesus' brethren.

Granted, then, the importance of the unbelief of Mary's own children, the extreme likelihood of a profound spiritual sympathy

and friendship between John Bar-Zebedee and Jesus and His mother, as well as a possible kinship (if John be Jesus' cousin and Mary's nephew), when considered together with the unbelief of Mary's own sons, form an almost irrefragable combination that both justifies and explains Jesus' choice.

- d. If it be objected that this view sees two families (that of Joseph and that of Cleophas, Clopas or Alphaeus) naming their sons with nearly identical names, this is no great difficulty, since these four names are all famous in Israel. (Lightfoot, *ibid.*, 268) No special claim is made for the order in which the names of the sons of Clopas-Alphaeus are given, except to show the coincidence of the first three names with those given in the Apostolic list. But, as the question marks on the graph indicate, no claim is made that all the men named were actually Apostles; the intriguing, but unanswerable, query is raised whether they might not be the same.

As Lightfoot (*ibid.* 269) notes further, the difficulty in seeing two families, possibly related, is not at all increased but actually diminished on the supposition that they were actually related, since family use of the names of common ancestors or relatives is most reasonable. (Cf. Lk. 1:59-61)

CONCLUSION

While the view that "the Lord's Brethren" were actually Jesus' half brothers, being true sons of Joseph and Mary born after the birth of Jesus, is not without weaknesses, it appears to possess fewer weaknesses than are found in the alternate theories, while at the same time this view explains equally well, if not better, the scraps and pieces of information given in Scripture.

Also, in relation to the motherhood of Mary, it may be said that

The interpretation that they are the Lord's real brethren ennobles and glorifies family life in all its relations and duties, and sanctifies motherhood with all its cares and trials as holier than a selfish isolation from the world, in order to evade the annoyances and humiliations inseparable from fidelity to our callings.

(*I. S. B. E.*, 520)

Thus, the polemic against the "perpetual virginity of Mary" is not by any means a polemic against Mary. Rather, it is the desire to

present the relations of our Lord in their proper light, in order better to understand our own position before God, for if we are ignoring a fundamental part of our mediation between us and God (the supposed mediation of Mary), then we do her injustice and weaken our own spiritual position on earth. On the other hand, since the major step in her exaltation, the human declaration of her perpetual virginity, is founded upon bad exegesis and human authority (i.e., of the Fathers who assert it), the modern Christian loses nothing to reject it.

"AND HE KNEW HER NOT UNTIL SHE HAD BORNE A SON"

Does the use of the word "until" in this Matthaean text suggest anything about what took place in the marital relations of Joseph and Mary after the birth of Jesus? Or, as many think, does the word "until" affirm only that Joseph kept Mary a virgin until the time of Jesus' birth, without either affirming or denying anything about his attitude following that event?

Fausto Salvoni (*Sesso e amore nella Bibbia*, 95-132) deals with the question underlying the problem of interpretation of the word "until": "Is there a defining use of the word 'until'?", by putting to critical examination the proofs offered. In reading the text of the English Bible, beware of missing the point of Salvoni's illustrations by failing to note that in English translations the word "until" might not have been used in the passages cited. However, a cognate idea is always present, even if the English translators adopted another word having the same meaning as "until."

1. "Until death . . ."

Many times Fathers and theologians try to prove the definitive sense of "until" by referring to those numerous Bible passages in which it is affirmed that a given thing took place until the death of an individual. Evidently the fact indicated could not be done after his death! However, the passages of this category have no value whatever, since the situation of the individual after death was so totally altered as to impede any possibility to act. But this is not true in the case of Matthew, which puts the limitation in a period in which there was yet the possibility for conjugal relations. Now if in Matthew we should have read "until death," there would not be anything

we could object to on this subject, since any matrimonial relationship would have been evidently and forever excluded. Unfortunately, this is not the case with Matthew. It would be useless to examine such examples, which, however, will be presented, even if briefly, for greater completeness:

- a. *Until the death of the individual.* (2 Sam. 6:23; 20:3; 2 Kg. 15:5; Job 27:2-5; 2 Kg. 7:3)
- b. *Until the death of one's adversaries.* (Psa. 112:8; 1 Mac. 5:54)
- c. *Until the end of the world.* Here, too, the passages are parallel to those on the death of the individual, except that instead of one's death, the end of the world or of humanity is spoken of. (Mt. 28:20; Psa. 72:7) Such passages evidently cannot be considered as being truly parallel with Matthew 1:25, because this latter text is not discussing the end of the world or of the individual which would have rendered any conjugal relationship impossible. Rather, we are talking about a particular period prior to it, that is, the birth of Jesus, after which conjugal relations continued to remain possible.

2. "Unto this day"

Cf. Dt. 34:6; Gen. 35:20; Mt. 27:8; 28:15. This expression really limits the consideration of the writer to the period prior to the limit set (the defining sense), not because that limit is inherent in the word "until," but because this is required by the limit established, which is the moment in which the writer is living. He wanted to limit his statement to this instant for the simple reason that the rest of the future remained unknown to him. The reality he indicated could have continued or not, for which reason he could not predict what would have happened after the moment in which he was writing, unless he had a divine revelation. So we are not talking about a true parallel with the passage in Matthew in which he is talking about a period prior to the moment in which the Evangelist was writing, that is, the birth of Jesus. If Matthew had written: "Joseph had no relations with Mary to this day," in that case, then, he would have excluded from his consideration all the time from Joseph's espousal of Mary until the time of writing the record by Matthew.

All the passages presented up to this point do not correspond at all to the "until" used in Matthew's sentence in our study, since, at the end fixed in them, it was not at all possible to act in the manner indicated, whereas, contrarily, the action of "knowing" Mary was

always possible after the birth of Jesus. Therefore, they are not parallels to the Matthaean text. For if they were, it would be necessary to read that Joseph did not have relations with the bride until her death, or to this day, or up to the moment of the time of writing or until the moment in which such an act was no longer possible.

Let us now see the importance of the Biblical "until" in the various cases where the action indicated by the principle verb always remained possible even after the limit established. Here we are in the field more exactly parallel with the Matthaean text under study.

3. Until a certain moment in the past.

In all these cases the "until" always presupposes a change of situation after the limit indicated.

- a. In the case in which the indication of the principle clause is positive, "until" affirms the denial of it at the moment of the limit set by "until." Examples offered by Salvoni are: Dan. 11:36; Gen. 24:19; Ruth 2:21; Nu. 32:17; Is. 30:17; Mt. 2:15, 19; Mt. 13:33; Lk. 13:21; Mt. 14:22; Mt. 26:36; Lk. 12:50; 24:49; Ac. 21:26; 25:21; 2 Pt. 1:19; cf. Rev. 22:5. In each of these illustrations he shows how a reasonable view of each case shows that, once a change is brought about in the situation, the action limited by "until" is no longer needed, possible or reasonable.
- b. If the principle clause is negative (as in the case of Matthew), the "until" always indicates the realization of the thing denied before.

Eliezar, sent by Abraham to search for a wife for his son Isaac, said to Laban, "I will not eat until I have said (what I must say)," after which, naturally, he would eat. (Gen. 24:33) Also the Jews that intended to kill Paul "made a vow not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul" (Ac. 23:12, 14, 21). After the transfiguration Jesus demanded that the three Apostles present not speak about the vision "until the Son of man be risen from the dead" (Mt. 17:9); afterwards they would have been able to talk about it. When Jesus left Jerusalem He said that they would not have seen Him any more until they received Him with the cry of "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord." In that moment, then, they would have seen Him. (Mt. 23:39) Other illustrations: Mt. 5:26; Lk. 22:16, 18, 34; Jn. 13:38; 18:27; 9:18; 1 Co. 4:5. After considering seeming exceptions to the rule (i.e., Psa. 110:1; 1 Co. 15:27f; Psa. 123:2; 1 Ti. 4:13; Lk. 1:80; cf. Lk. 3:4 and 7:24;

Gen. 49:10; Nu. 20:17; Gen. 28:15 of cf. vv. 20, 21; Mt. 12:18-21 citing Isa. 42:1-4), Salvoni concludes that, unless the action which is the logical opposite to that indicated in the principle clause is rendered impossible by death or the end of the world or a (then) unknown future, the action is to be considered possible, the limitation "until" indicating the change of what was affirmed or denied by the principle verb.

To keep from limiting the abstinence from marital relations to the period prior to the birth of Jesus, Matthew would have had to use an expression similar to that describing Judith where it is said that after the death of her first husband, "No man knew her all the days of her life." (Judith 16:22)

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE PASSAGE

Now we need to see why Matthew should have used such a limiting formula. For what reason did he want to insist on the fact that the marital relations did not take place before the birth of Jesus?

1. Some have found the motive in the fact that Matthew wanted to use this phrase to underline the virginal conception of Mary and the purely legal paternity of Joseph. But there was no motive to take up this theme again, since it had already been clearly established by the expression "and before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 1:16), or else by the words of the angel to Joseph: "Do not fear to take Mary your wife, because what is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit." (1:20) Later marital relations would not have had any influence on the conception that had already taken place.
2. Others insist on the fact that Matthew wanted to demonstrate how the prophecy of Isaiah that he had cited had been fully realized in Mary: "Behold the *virgin* shall be *with child*: and she *shall bring* forth a son; and He will be called Emmanuel." (Mt. 1:23 = Isa. 7:14) Here the virginity of Mary is not only affirmed at the time of the conception, but also at the time of the birth. But the wife of Joseph would not have been a virgin at the time of the birth of Jesus, had Joseph had conjugal relations with her prior to that moment. Thus, those who hold this view emphasize that clear up to the moment of delivery Joseph respected the virginity of his own wife.

But as we have seen before, with this phrase Matthew hints at conjugal relations in a later period, i.e., after the birth. In fact, after having said that Joseph took Mary as his wife and introduced her into his own house, it was logical for the reader to conclude that he would have treated her as his wife. Therefore, Matthew corrects such a thought, saying that in fact they abstain from every contact until the birth of Jesus. The reader was logically led to conclude, by the normal course of marital relations, that later he acted toward her as any husband. Even if his intent had been to announce that the bride remained a virgin until the birth of Jesus, Matthew used language that clearly lets the reader catch a glimpse of a different comportment after that birth. If Matthew had been convinced that Mary remained always a virgin, he would not have expressed himself in an ambiguous, actually compromising, phrase such as he did.

Blinzler does not want to feel this difficulty and debates it by saying that inasmuch as the early Christians knew that Jesus did not have brothers german by Mary, the expression of Matthew did not cause them any difficulty. But this argument has the defect of supposing already proved what must yet be demonstrated. Who says that the early Christians, who tranquilly speak of brothers and sisters of Jesus, did not consider them as being born from Mary and Joseph? Given the fact that there were persons described as "brothers of the Lord," would it not have been much simpler to clarify yet further the fact of the perpetual virginity of Mary, if her supposed condition had possessed such importance for Christian theology? The early believers were interested in Jesus and not in the virginity of Mary, and this latter truth had value only insofar as it could document the virginal conception of the Christ. Having completed this mission, Mary returned, as far as they were concerned, to the situation of all other women.

3. Why did Joseph abstain from any marital relationship until the birth of Jesus? It is usually thought that Mary, being a temple of God, that she would be considered taboo for Joseph. But this reasoning is based upon the metaphysical concepts of much later Catholic theology that Joseph did not possess at that time. For him Mary was his own wife, for him the yet unborn babe was the fruit of a special divine intervention, after whose birth there could be no reasons for which he should regard his own wife as taboo. Given the illumination by the angel, it would have been logical, as Matthew says, that Joseph should have abstained from marital

relations as long as the unborn Babe lived in the womb of Mary, and not afterwards.

4. Fausto Salvoni's own view is that due to influences of the Essenes felt in Jewish life, perhaps Joseph would have abstained from regular marital relations during the pregnancy, even as the Essenes reputedly did. This, even though not a member or even a sympathizer with their movement. Of course, this view is absolutely impossible to prove, however attractive to some, since it is impossible to document to what extent the Essene's views permeated and affected Jewish life or to what extent Joseph or Mary would have respected those views.

Salvoni concludes by repeating that the perpetual virginity of Mary, asserted by many, creates some not indifferent Biblical problems, since it seems to be contradicted by clear New Testament testimonies. Such a doctrine obligates the believer to give to the "until" of Matthew a defining sense that is never found elsewhere in Holy Scripture, introducing into it an exception without any sure foundation.

DO YOU HAVE THE WORD IN YOUR HEART?

Matthew 13

Can you remember who made each of the following statements? What was the occasion? To whom was it spoken? What did they mean by it? Are there any manuscript variations or other ways of translating it? Is it possible to apply its truth to our own day? If so, how?

1. "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given."
2. "Blessed are your eyes, for they see . . ."
3. ". . . and the thorns grew up and choked them."
4. "Let them both grow together until the harvest . . ."
5. ". . . but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath."
6. "Is not this the carpenter's son?"
7. "All these things spake Jesus in parables unto the multitudes; and without a parable spake he nothing unto them: *that it might be fulfilled* which was spoken through the prophet . . ." (Deal