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The BROTHERS
of JESUS

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The brothers of Jesus

Christianity has a representative commonly known as “the Church”. Writers are careful to make difference between any church and the Church; in fact, the capital C sets the difference, and readers immediately notice it and understand what are they reading about.

Church and Christianity are the same. Nobody rebukes it, and for centuries the fusion has become a standard in Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, and South America; even Protestantism, as a segment of the Church, does not take any negative consideration on this matter.

The Church, or, the Catholic Church, has shown its preeminence by establishing the key dogmas among the Christian Religion (i. e. Holy Trinity, Sunday, December 25 as Jesus' birthdate, the Cross as Christian symbol and more). Protestants strive rejecting the Church as leader in dogmas establishment, however, the best witness in behalf of the Church (the Catholic Church) is history, opposers reject this truth but in the meantime are unable to prove the opposite. The Church, and the Catholic Church are the same along history.

But the Church has also established dogmas some non-catholics organizations reject, one of those is “*the perpetual virginity of Mary*”. The main point of this dogma is to present Mary as a super special baby girl, and a virgin forever even after Jesus birth.

This dogma was rejection free in times when the Church was a predominant authority, but those times are gone, the last centuries have brought opportunity for both, serious theologians and popular multitudes, to examine and reject this dogma because the common sense clearly shows it as contradictory to the Bible.

The Catholic theology says a miracle happened because after Jesus was born Mary continued a virgin, but in the meantime that theology fails to prove how such a thing could occur because a phenomenon like that has no biblical support. Thus, arguments and more arguments has been the only support. Arguments were very effective in past times, nowadays they offer no credibility except for the Catholic Christianity.

The previous virginal condition of Mary is testified by the Holy Scripture as it is written:

“Then Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I do not know a man?’ And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.’” (Luke 1:34-35. New King James Version).

This clearly shows Jesus was born by the power of the Almighty, Joseph did not intervene. Thereafter the Holy Scriptures mention Joseph and Mary as a normal couple, here is where the Church react trying to validate a miracle that never happened, that is: Mary continued a virgin after given birth. In the Bible, she is a normal woman but in the Catholic theology she is presented supernatural.

Because the perpetual virginity of Mary is a phenomenon unknown by the Holy Scriptures, that dogma was established upon arguments, in the meantime, those arguments are based upon apocryphal literature. In that kind of literature Mary is presented a super special young woman. So this kind of literature is the base for the Catholic theology; thenceforth a long list of arguments have been set.

The actual Canon of the New Testament was set by the Church councils, at those times the apocryphal literature was rejected as unworthy, not inspired by God.

Nowadays it is said that kind of literature was written either by the apostles or by people close related to them and deserves the same attention than the inspired writings, thus, what in the past was taken under unworthy category today has been elevated to the same category of the canonical books.

Mary's parents

In regard of Mary's parents, the New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia says:

“St. Anne

Anne (Hebrew, Hannah, grace; also spelled Ann, Anne, Anna) is the traditional name of the mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

All our information concerning the names and lives of Sts. Joachim and Anne, the parents of Mary, is derived from apocryphal literature, the Gospel of the Nativity of Mary, the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew and the Protoevangelium of James. Though the earliest form of the latter, on which directly or indirectly the other two seem to be based, goes back to about A.D. 150, we can hardly accept as beyond doubt its various statements on its sole authority. In the Orient the Protoevangelium had great authority and portions of it were read on the feasts of Mary by the Greeks, Syrians, Copts, and Arabians. In the Occident, however, it was rejected by the Fathers of the Church until its contents were incorporated by Jacobus de Voragine in his “Golden Legend” in the thirteenth century. From that time on the story of St. Anne spread over the West and was amply developed, until St. Anne became one of the most popular saints also of the Latin Church.

The Protoevangelium gives the following account: In Nazareth there lived a rich and pious couple, Joachim and Hannah. They were childless. When on a feast day Joachim presented himself to offer sacrifice in the temple, he was repulsed by a certain Ruben, under the pretext that men without offspring were unworthy to be admitted. Whereupon Joachim, bowed down with grief, did not return home, but went into the mountains to make his plaint to God in solitude. Also Hannah, having learned the reason of the prolonged absence of her husband, cried to the Lord to take away from her the curse of sterility, promising to dedicate her child to the service of God. Their prayers were heard; an angel came to Hannah and said: “Hannah, the Lord has looked upon thy tears; thou shalt conceive

and give birth and the fruit of thy womb shall be blessed by all the world". The angel made the same promise to Joachim, who returned to his wife. Hannah gave birth to a daughter whom she called Miriam (Mary). Since this story is apparently a reproduction of the biblical account of the conception of Samuel, whose mother was also called Hannah, even the name of the mother of Mary seems to be doubtful".

For the experienced reader it is easy to note a remarkable difference between the content of the canonical books and the content of this account, this second one is full of fantasy about a couple that never existed. Of course I am no saying Mary had no parents; I am saying this account is only a fictitious narrative, a fantasy about an imaginary couple this apocryphal book has assigned to Mary as parents. The anonymous author pretends to set this Anna in the same level of Anna mother of Samuel.

Apocryphal literature

This same Encyclopedia declares: "

All our information concerning the names and lives of Sts. Joachim and Anne, the parents of Mary, is derived from apocryphal literature".

This means the mention of Mary's parents in the dogma doesn't come from the Holy Scripture but from literature most Church fathers once rejected as of no genuine inspiration.

Moreover, the New Advent Encyclopedia says:

"It should be borne in mind, however, that the apocryphal character of these writings, that is to say, their rejection from the canon, and their unguineness do not imply that no heed whatever should be taken of some of their assertions; side by side, indeed, with unwarranted and legendary facts, they contain some historical data borrowed from reliable traditions or documents".

Thus, what once was taken as unreliable source eventually became reliable, and although no genuineness was attributed, Catholic exegetes today claim no rejection must prevail since that literature is the source to make their dogma alive.

That position not only favors those books where Joachim, Anna, Mary and her supposed perpetual virginity are mentioned, this is also a recognition to all gnostic books discovered in Nag Hammadi Library mostly known as gnostic literature where the rejected Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Jude belong.

Since there is no reason to reject those pseudo-gospels, no reasonable position can be taken against gnostic literature; nowadays Christian Religion is confronted about these two kind of apocryphal literature.

In regard of this Joachim the apocryphal Protoevangelium of James says:

"When on a feast day Joachim presented himself to offer sacrifice in the temple, he was repulsed by a certain Ruben, under the pretext that men without offspring were

unworthy to be admitted".

This is simple imagination, the Torah does not forbid a childless man to present sacrifices in the temple. The Torah forbids unclean people to come to the temple, however, after their purification they were admitted by God and entitled to offer sacrifices.

Concerning Anna, the New Advent Encyclopedia says:

"Since this story is apparently a reproduction of the biblical account of the conception of Samuel, whose mother was also called Hannah, even the name of the mother of Mary seems to be doubtful".

Thus, as Joachim is an imaginary name the same applies to Anna. More about this imaginary couple is found in the Protoevangelium of James.

About Mary (The Protoevangelium of James)

First of all, it is interesting to know that the name "Protoevangelium of James is not the original name of this apocryphal, Doctor Aurelio de Santos Otero, in his "Los Evangelios Apócrifos" (The Apocryphal Gospels) says the name was used the first time by F. Postel, a French Humanist in the XVI century A. D.

"2. And his wife Anna mourned in two mournings, and lamented in two lamentations, saying: I shall bewail my widowhood; I shall bewail my childlessness. And the great day of the Lord was at hand; and Judith her maid-servant said: How long dost thou humiliate thy soul? Behold, the great day of the Lord is at hand, and it is unlawful for thee to mourn. But take this head-band, which the woman that made it gave to me; for it is not proper that I should wear it, because I am a maid-servant, and it has a royal appearance. And Anna said: Depart from me; for I have not done such things, and the Lord has brought me very low. I fear that some wicked person has given it to thee, and thou hast come to make me a sharer in thy sin. And Judith said: Why should I curse thee, seeing that the Lord hath shut thy womb, so as not to give thee fruit in Israel? And Anna was grieved exceedingly, and put off her garments of mourning, and cleaned her head, and put on her wedding garments, and about the ninth hour went down to the garden to walk. And she saw a laurel, and sat under it, and prayed to the Lord, saying: O God of our fathers, bless me and hear my prayer, as Thou didst bless the womb of Sarah, and didst give her a son Isaac.

3. And gazing towards the heaven, she saw a sparrow's nest in the laurel, and made a lamentation in herself, saying: Alas! who begot me? and what womb produced me? because I have become a curse in the presence of the sons of Israel, and I have been reproached, and they have driven me in derision out of the temple of the Lord. Alas! to what have I been likened? I am not like the fowls of the heaven, because even the fowls of the heaven are productive before Thee, O Lord. Alas! to what have I been likened? I am not like the beasts of the earth, because even the

beasts of the earth are productive before Thee, O Lord. Alas! to what have I been likened? I am not like these waters, because even these waters are productive before Thee, O Lord. Alas! to what have I been likened? I am not like this earth, because even the earth bringeth forth its fruits in season, and blesseth Thee, O Lord.

4. And, behold, an angel of the Lord stood by, saying: Anna, Anna, the Lord hath heard thy prayer, and thou shalt conceive, and shall bring forth; and thy seed shall be spoken of in all the world. And Anna said: As the Lord my God liveth, if I beget either male or female, I will bring it as a gift to the Lord my God; and it shall minister to Him in holy things all the days of its life. And, behold, two angels came, saying to her: Behold, Joachim thy husband is coming with his flocks. For an angel of the Lord went down to him, saying: Joachim, Joachim, the Lord God hath heard thy prayer Go down hence; for, behold, thy wife Anna shall conceive. And Joachim went down and called his shepherds, saying: Bring me hither ten she-lambs without spot or blemish, and they shall be for the Lord my God; and bring me twelve tender calves, and they shall be for the priests and the elders; and a hundred goats for all the people. And, behold, Joachim came with his flocks; and Anna stood by the gate, and saw Joachim coming, and she ran anti hung upon his neck, saying: Now I know that the Lord God hath blessed me exceedingly; for, behold the widow no longer a widow, and I the childless shall conceive. And Joachim rested the first day in his house.

5. And on the following day he brought his offerings, saying in himself: If the Lord God has been rendered gracious to me, the plate on the priest's forehead will make it manifest to me. And Joachim brought his offerings, and observed attentively the priest's plate when he went up to the altar of the Lord, and he saw no sin in himself. And Joachim said: Now I know that the Lord has been gracious unto me, and has remitted all my sins. And he went down from the temple of the Lord justified, and departed to his own house. And her months were fulfilled, and in the ninth month Anna brought forth. And she said to the midwife: What have I brought forth? and she said: A girl. And said Anna: My soul has been magnified this day. And she laid her down. And the days having been fulfilled, Anna was purified, and gave the breast to the child, and called her name Mary.

6. And the child grew strong day by day; and when she was six months old, her mother set her on the ground to try whether she could stand, and she walked seven steps and came into her bosom; and she snatched her up, saying: As the Lord my God liveth, thou shalt not walk on this earth until I bring thee into the temple of the Lord. And she made a sanctuary in her bed-chamber, and allowed nothing common or unclean to pass through her. And she called the undefiled daughters of the Hebrews, and they led her astray. And when she was a year old, Joachim made a great feast, and invited the priests, and the scribes,

and the elders, and all the people of Israel. And Joachim brought the child to the priests; and they blessed her, saying: O God of our fathers, bless this child, and give her an everlasting name to be named in all generations. And all the people said: So be it, so be it, amen. And he brought her to the chief priests; and they blessed her, saying: O God most high, look upon this child, and bless her with the utmost blessing, which shall be for ever. And her mother snatched her up, and took her into the sanctuary of her bed-chamber, and gave her the breast. And Anna made a song to the Lord God, saying: I will sing a song to the Lord my God, for He hath looked upon me, and hath taken away the reproach of mine enemies; and the Lord hath given the the fruit of His righteousness, singular in its kind, and richly endowed before Him. Who will tell the sons of Rubim that Anna gives suck? Hear, hear, ye twelve tribes of Israel, that Anna gives suck. And she laid her to rest in the bed-chamber of her sanctuary, and went out and ministered unto them. And when the supper was ended, they went down rejoicing, and glorifying the God of Israel".

Undoubtedly, this account has been taken from the Book of Samuel and distorted to be applied to Mary. Samuel was taken to the temple by Anna his other. Mary was also taken to the temple by her mother Anna, but of course this girl is presented more special than Samuel.

The story continues:

"7. And her months were added to the child. And the child was two years old, and Joachim said: Let us take her up to the temple of the Lord, that we may pay the vow that we have vowed, lest perchance the Lord send to us, and our offering be not received. And Anna said: Let us wait for the third year, in order that the child may not seek for father or mother. And Joachim said: So let us wait. And the child was three years old, and Joachim said: Invite the daughters of the Hebrews that are undefiled, and let them take each a lamp, and let them stand with the lamps burning, that the child may not turn back, and her heart be captivated from the temple of the Lord. And they did so until they went up into the temple of the Lord. And the priest received her, and kissed her, and blessed her, saying: The Lord has magnified thy name in all generations. In thee, on the last of the days, the Lord will manifest His redemption to the sons of Israel. And he set her down upon the third step of the altar, and the Lord God sent grace upon her; and she danced with her feet, and all the house of Israel loved her.

8. And her parents went down marvelling, and praising the Lord God, because the child had not turned back. And Mary was in the temple of the Lord as if she were a dove that dwelt there, and she received food from the hand of an angel. And when she was twelve years old there was held a council of the priests, saying: Behold, Mary has reached the age of twelve years in the temple of the Lord. What then shall we do with her, test perchance she defile the sanctuary of the Lord? And they said to the high priest:

Thou standest by the altar of the Lord; go in, and pray concerning her; and whatever the Lord shall manifest unto thee, that also will we do. And the high priest went in, taking the robe with the twelve bells into the holy of holies; and he prayed concerning her. And behold an angel of the Lord stood by him, saying unto him: Zacharias, Zacharias, go out and assemble the widowers of the people, and let them bring each his rod; and to whomsoever the Lord shall show a sign, his wife shall she be. And the heralds went out through all the circuit of Judaea, and the trumpet of the Lord sounded, and all ran.

9. And Joseph, throwing away his axe, went out to meet them; and when they had assembled, they went away to the high priest, taking with them their rods. And he, taking the rods of all of them, entered into the temple, and prayed; and having ended his prayer, he took the rods and came out, and gave them to them: but there was no sign in them, and Joseph took his rod last; and, behold, a dove came out of the rod, and flew upon Joseph's head. And the priest said to Joseph, Thou hast been chosen by lot to take into thy keeping the virgin of the Lord. But Joseph refused, saying: I have children, and I am an old man, and she is a young girl. I am afraid lest I become a laughing-stock to the sons of Israel. And the priest said to Joseph: Fear the Lord thy God, and remember what the Lord did to Dathan, and Abiram, and Korah; how the earth opened, and they were swallowed up on account of their contradiction. And now fear, O Joseph, lest the same things happen in thy house. And Joseph was afraid, and took her into his keeping. And Joseph said to Mary: Behold, I have received thee from the temple of the Lord; and now I leave thee in my house, and go away to build my buildings, and I shall come to thee. The Lord will protect thee."

This number 9 says that Joseph was ordered to keep Mary: "And the priest said to Joseph, Thou hast been chosen by lot to take into thy keeping the virgin of the Lord". Going ahead in the reading Joseph is looking for a midwife to assist Mary to give birth.

"19. And I saw a woman coming down from the hill-country, and she said to me: O man, whither art thou going? And I said: I am seeking an Hebrew midwife. And she answered and said unto me: Art thou of Israel? And I said to her: Yes. And she said: And who is it that is bringing forth in the cave? And I said: A woman betrothed to me. And she said to me: Is she not thy wife? And I said to her: It is Mary that was reared in the temple of the Lord, and I obtained her by lot as my wife"

It is not clear how the word 'keeping' must be understood within the tradition; while Joseph was to keep Mary in custody, he says Mary was given to him as wife. A wife only to be care of by him without any relationship?, or the term wife means a woman with whom raise a family? 'Betrothed' has no other meaning than: 'enter into a formal agreement to marry'; nevertheless, the word is manipulated to suggest it doesn't mean 'the woman to marry a man' but simply a virgin to be

care of.

The anonymous writers of the Old Testament pseudepigrapha, and those of the New, had exactly the same purpose which was to invent colorful legends and make them to run between the words written by the genuine inspired writers, and have made a segment of Christian theologians to disagree whether or not the apocryphal literature must be accepted with the same value than the New Testament writings.

About postpartum virginity

"...And the midwife went forth out of the cave, and Salome met her. And she said to her: Salome, Salome, I have a strange sight to relate to thee: a virgin has brought forth -- a thing which her nature admits not of. Then said Salome: As the Lord my God liveth, unless I thrust in my finger, and search the parts, I will not believe that a virgin has brought forth.

20. And the midwife went in, and said to Mary: Show thyself; for no small controversy has arisen about thee. And Salome put in her finger, and cried out, and said: Woe is me for mine iniquity and mine unbelief, because I have tempted the living God; and, behold, my hand is dropping off as if burned with fire. And she bent her knees before the Lord, saying: O God of my fathers, remember that I am the seed of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; do not make a show of me to the sons of Israel, but restore me to the poor; for Thou knowest, O Lord, that in Thy name I have performed my services, and that I have received my reward at Thy hand. And, behold, an angel of the Lord stood by her, saying to her: Salome, Salome, the Lord hath heard thee. Put thy hand to the infant, and carry it, and thou wilt have safety and joy. And Salome went and carried it, saying: I will worship Him, because a great King has been born to Israel. And, behold, Salome was immediately cured, and she went forth out of the cave justified. And behold a voice saying: Salome, Salome, tell not the strange things thou hast seen, until the child has come into Jerusalem".

Mary's virginity before the childbirth is irrefutable since the account is based on the inspired gospels, and it appears the whole Christianity agree without hesitation.

However, when the topic deals with the virginity after childbirth things are entirely different because the base of all arguments is not the Bible but the simple opinion of some Church fathers whose writings built an entire fortress to protect their own views against their opponents. Here is where the Protoevangelium of James fits perfectly.

Doctor Aurelio de Santos Otero, on this apocryphal, says:

"Its influence has been enormous. The Protoevangelium influenced powerfully on hymnographers, preachers, iconographers, and even doctors of the byzantine Church (greek, slave, etc.). In the East there were Pseudo Matthew and De nativitate in charge to transmit and diffuse the protoevangelical legends. These did not have immediate echo within ecclesiastical literary circles (Saint

Jerome made strong opposition), but they infiltrated in the people like underground stream and flourishing in repeated times among popular traditions..” (Introduction to the «Protoevangelium of James». Translated from Spanish).

By this erudite Doctor we understand what was the source the doctors of the Church took to build up their arguments in regard of Mary’s virginity after childbirth.

The Bible does not provide any ground to help the tradition; the Protoevangelium and the Pseudo Matthew do it.

Although the tradition validate Mary’s virginity after Jesus was born based upon some Church doctors, a vast number of non-catholics (perhaps a majority) see no reason to accept a topic that openly contradicts the Holy Scripture, because on this topic the tradition and comments from the Church fathers do not count.

Arguments (cousins, brothers, relatives)

The canonical Scriptures

Simple and uncomplicated are those verses of the gospels (Matt. 12:46; Matt. 13:55; Mark 3:31–34; Mark 6:3; Luke 8:19–20; John 2:12, 7:3, 5, 10; Acts 1:14; 1 Cor. 9:5).), where brothers and sisters of Jesus are mentioned. And it is easy to conclude the inspired writers had no intention to write something their readers had to understand different: In all these verses brothers mean brothers, and sisters mean sisters as children born to the same married couple.

It is unreasonable and lacking of formality to say the apostles mention several brothers and sisters but that in the reality they did not mean brothers and sisters but ‘cousins’, or ‘relatives’, or ‘brothers by ancestral roots’.

The argument puts in the apostles’ mouth a meaning that adulterates their words. Of course it is easy to change or modify their words as they died long time after the tradition built the dogma concerning the perpetual virginity. More of this is mentioned below.

Because the simple reading of these verses openly contradicts the tradition, it is argued the term brother and sister not necessarily means children born to the matrimony because both nouns are used in the Scriptures to also designate relatives. Thus, an argument, not the clear meaning of the verses, is the base to distort the apostles’ words with meanings God did not inspired.

Meanwhile, this traditional point is not clearly defined because there are three different arguments: one says those brothers and sisters were ‘cousins’, the second argument says they were ‘half-brothers’ (Joseph’s children from a previous matrimony), and the third says when the Bible mentions brothers the real meaning is relatives. These three arguments sets nothing real or concrete but lead to conclude the point lacks of strong ground. Any of these arguments destroy the other two.

“Cousins”

The greek word συγγενεῖς (sungeneis) is translated by

some Bible versions as cousins, but the real meaning of that greek word is ‘relatives’, this word has wider meaning than cousins and opens the opportunity to discover uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews and more.

The greek word for cousin is ‘anepsios’, a word the Holy Scripture never uses, therefore, translating ‘cousins’ is arbitrary because the correct word for sungeneis is ‘relatives’.

Were Mary and Elizabeth cousins? Probably yes, probably not. Both women descended from the Tribe of Levy. Levy is the father of Gershon, Kohath and Merari. From Kohath comes Amram, and from Amram comes Aaron.

Luke 1:5 (New King James Version says:

“There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron and her name was Elizabeth”.

It is clear Elizabeth descended from Aaron while Mary doesn’t, but she still belongs to one of the branches of the Tribe of Levy. Thus, a better translation of the word ‘sungeneis’ is relative instead of cousin.

According Luke 1:7, Elizabeth was well advanced in years while Luke 1:27 says Mary was a virgin, presumably very young; this sets a notorious difference between a very old woman and a very young one. Again, the best translation for the greek word is relatives, not cousins. This is why The New International Version translates Luke 1:36 this way:

“Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month”.

Although the word ‘relatives’ is more accurate, some Catholic versions of the Bible in Spanish language render ‘primos’ (cousins), which is entire controversial.

In 1 Timothy 5:8 the greek word συγγενεῖς appears and is correctly translated under the meaning of relatives,

“If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever”. (New International Version)

Note in this verse the use of ‘relatives’ and ‘immediate family’, two different words and two different meanings. A comparison between both words clearly shows a man with his own family plus relatives.

Thus, the popular argument by which the word relatives is substituted by cousins is void, meaningless.

“Brothers”

Joseph, Mary his wife and their children, a normal family in Israel. This view does not fit in the Church’s dogma since Mary must be presented a virgin forever. Thus, what it is easy to understand by simple reading of those verses mentioned in the subtitle becomes unnecessarily distorted and complicated, and the topic will remain a perpetual controversy until the end of this world.

It has been said above: *“Because the simple reading of these verses openly contradicts the tradition, it is argued the term brother and sister not necessarily means children born to the*

matrimony, because, it is said, both nouns are used in the Scriptures to also designate relatives". It is not necessary a deep examination of the traditional arguments to notice notorious incoherence. It is notorious incoherence because the versicles taken to support the idea are out of context. Taking versicles out of context, or indiscriminately, is improper manipulation, it is not exegesis but eisegesis; biblical exegetes know that.

In Genesis 13:8 (New International Version) it is read:

"So Abram said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers".

Nobody ignores Abraham was Lot's uncle. Now, the question is, because in this moment Abraham calls Lot his brother is he telling Lot is no longer his nephew? Of course not. Belonging to the same ancestral root does not destroys their relationship of uncle and nephew.

Here is where the tradition fails by taking verses indiscriminately. How the tradition can prove the versicles mentioned in the subtitle under consideration must be interpreted based on Abraham's words?

All israelites are brothers because the common ancestral root they have is Abraham. In this context, Psalm 22:22 (New International Version) says

"I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you".

This is a prophesy about our Lord Jesus Christ. In this context brothers are all descendants of Abraham. In the same sense Genesis 31:54 (New King James Version) says:

"Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his brethren to eat bread. And they ate bread and stayed all night on the mountain".

Laban and those with him are called brothers, but Laban was Jacob's uncle. Now, since Genesis 31:54 mentions brothers it must be understood Laban were no longer Jacob's uncle?

An interesting question is: because in Abraham all israelites are brothers the Bible readers must understand the children in a matrimony are not brothers? What are they then? Again, where to find a reliable and solid ground to say Jesus' brothers and sisters are not his brothers and sisters?

In Numbers 27:9 (New International Version) says:

"If he has no daughter, give his inheritance to his brothers".

The question is: To whom this verse is calling brothers? To all descendants of Israel or specifically to children born to a matrimony? Is Moses telling the inheritance of a particular man does not belong to his own children but to the whole people or Israel? Of course not.

The Bible is clear about both relationships, and it never mixes brothers by ancestral roots with those that are brothers within a particular family; improper exegesis is arbitrary, is false interpretation; and only it is made to favor a senseless tradition.

In Mark 6:3 (New International Version) is read:

"Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the

brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us? And they took offense at him".

Let's examine this scene:

Jesus was preaching in the synagogue, he was surrounded by many amazed jews who asked each other: *"Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?"*.

In which sense this versicle must be understood? Jews already knew in Abraham they all were brothers including Joseph, Mary and their children, even though they say: *"Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?"* Arbitrary distortions to favor the tradition is made by arguing they referred Jesus' brothers and sisters as people under the same ancestry. It is so clear they were not applying the nouns brothers and sisters to Jesus and his brothers in the sense Abraham called Lot brother, they applied them referring to children of the matrimony.

A previous matrimony

A frequent argument used to say that when Joseph married Mary he did not really married her but he took her under his care; and the children Mark 6:3 mentions were not born in their matrimony but they were born to Joseph from a previous matrimony. The Protoevangelium of James already transcribed tells the story. Now let's see the following:

"...The references of the New Testament to the «brothers of Jesus» might suggest the idea that Mary had later children from Joseph...These reasons move the author of the Protoevangelium to take as many arguments as he can in defense of the triple virginity of Mary: Before partum (proof of water), in partum (examine by the midwife), after partum (explanation about «Jesus' brothers» as children born to Joseph in a previous matrimony to whom, by this reason is presented as an old man)".

This third explanation had big success in the later exegesis of the gospel. This was echoed by Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Saint Hilary, Saint Ambrose, Saint Augustine, etc., until Saint Jerome removed it and proposed his own idea in the sense that the title 'brother' in the New Testament is given to any relative united by narrow relationship either blood relation or affinity".

Doctor Aurelio de Santos Otero tells what really happened around the fourth century A. D.

None of those Church doctors applied the term brothers or sisters to any person except to children of the same father and mother; they did not ignore the jewish took relatives as 'brothers', but that custom was not enough to confuse them; however, when Jerome became predominant he decided to apply the term to Jesus' brothers and sisters, this is the actual argument.

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