

# WAS JESUS THE ONLY CHILD OF MARY?

THE plain truth of the Bible, which no one can gainsay, is that Joseph and Mary, after the birth of Jesus Christ, live a normal married life and had other children. But the tendency of the Romish Church to impose superstitions upon its adherents has made many people to be willingly blind to this fact.

Concerning Mary who was described as a Jewish maiden of the house of David, *The Catholic Encyclopaedic Dictionary* states: "She was betrothed to a carpenter, Joseph...in due course she gave birth at Bethlehem to Jesus, the God-man. Both before and after her miraculous childbearing she was a virgin and so remained all her days, *according to the unanimous and perpetual tradition and teaching of the Church*". – Page 310, italics ours.

Note that the belief of the perpetual virginity of Mary is NOT founded on the Scriptures but on "tradition and teaching of the Church". Not the Church in the Apostles' days but the Church at the time of Constantine the Emperor of Rome. We shall expound more on this point as we go along.

One of the well-known authorities of Roman Catholicism was James Cardinal Gibbons, the Archbishop of Baltimore. In defence of the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary, he wrote in his book *The Faith Of Our Fathers*, thus: "The Church teaches us that she was always a Virgin – a Virgin before her espousal, during her married life and after her spouse's death...That she remained a Virgin till after the birth of Jesus is expressly stated in the Gospel. (Matthew 1: 25) It is not less certain that she continued in the same state during the remainder of her days; for in the Apostles' and the Nicene Creed she is called a Virgin, and that epithet cannot be restricted to the time of our Saviour's birth. It must be referred to her whole life, inasmuch as both creeds were compiled long after she had passed away..." (Page 138).

From the works of Cardinal Gibbons no one could doubt his brilliance in scholarship but the moment one sets about to defend the indefensible – especially as opposed to the truth of God's word – one cannot escape from running into absurdities. The cardinal knew very well that the so-called Apostles' Creed was a formula of profession of faith which came into existence long after the death of all the early apostles of Jesus Christ.

The Roman Catholic Church has admitted that the "Apostles' Creed" was based on tradition and that "it was drawn up after the death of the Apostles' and assumed its present form in the 5th century". (Vide the *Catholic Voice* of June 1955, page 280) Since they knew that it was not the work of the Apostles, why did they entitle it *Apostles' Creed*?

The Nicene Creed was drawn up at the first council of Nicaea convened by the Emperor Constantine with the sanction of Pope Silvester I, in 325 A.D. That council which sought to blend pagan superstitions with the Christian truth was mostly responsible for the obnoxious errors which have led Christendom astray. Neither the "Apostles' Creed" nor the Nicene Creed is

authoritative. *The Catholic Encyclopaedic Dictionary* has this to say: “No one of the so-called ‘historic creeds of Christendom’ is a complete and final statement of the Christian faith nor was such, nor intended to be such, even at the time of its first drawing-up.” (page 138)

So, for Cardinal Gibbons to rest his assumptions of the perpetual virginity of Mary on those invented creeds in the way he did is, unfortunately, delusive.

### The Truth

The truth is that Mary was a virgin until she gave birth to Jesus Christ. This was so in order to fulfil the prophecy which God caused Isaiah to utter to the effect that a virgin would conceive and bear a son whose name would be Immanuel. – Isaiah. 7: 14; cp Matthew 1: 23.

After Mary had been espoused to Joseph she became pregnant while she was still a virgin. But Joseph suspected her of immoral behaviour and so, being a man of stern principle, he decided to divorce her but in a quiet manner so as not to disgrace her publicly. While he thought over this issue, an angel of God appeared to him in a dream, saying: “Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost (Spirit). And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.” – Matthew 1: 18-21.

Joseph received the Lord’s revelation in good faith. Therefore, in obedience to the angel’s counsel, he shelved his decision and retained Mary as his legal wife. But the point is that, because of his fear of God, he had no sexual dealing with her until she had given birth to Jesus Christ. As it is written: “Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.” – Matthew 1: 24, 25.

In the first place, if God had ordained that Mary should remain a virgin forever Joseph would not have been permitted to marry her. What the angel told Joseph is quite clear: “Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife.” It is unreasonable to imagine that Mary was merely a “traditional” wife who had not the experience of conjugal relationship with her husband.

Secondly, the Gospel account shows vividly that Joseph had carnal relationship with Mary but after the birth of Christ. St. Matthew’s record states that Joseph “took unto him his wife: AND KNEW HER NOT (that is he had no sexual knowledge of her) TILL she had brought forth her firstborn son.” (Matthew 1: 24, 25) *The New English Bible* renders the text thus: “He (Joseph) took Mary home to be his wife, but had no intercourse with her until her son (Jesus) was born.” This in truth means that after the birth of Mary’s firstborn son (Jesus) Joseph had carnal knowledge of her. And he was perfectly in order; he did not violate the instruction of God, rather he complied with the divine mandate.

If Joseph had no sexual dealing with Mary at all there would have been no need to limit the period of time he had no sexual knowledge of her with the clause “till she brought forth her firstborn son”.

And thirdly, if Jesus Christ was the only son of Mary, it would have been unnecessary to refer to him as “her first born Son”. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines “firstborn” as the “eldest child”. This, precisely, is the understanding given in the Holy Bible. We talk of an eldest child where there are other children. Hence in the ordinances in regard to the consecration of the firstborn God said to the Jews: “The firstborn of thy SONS shalt thou give unto me.” – Exodus 22: 29.

Indeed, there is abundance of evidence in the Scriptures to show that Mary had other children after the birth of Jesus Christ – her firstborn son – and the names of some of them were even specifically mentioned. When Jesus began his ministry, there was an occasion he went to his home town with his disciples and entered the synagogue on a sabbath day to teach. Those who heard him were amazed at his wisdom and his miracles. Considering that he was just a local man like themselves, they were moved to ask: “From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty work are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.” – Mark 6: 1-4. See also Matthew 13: 54-57.

Some people say that the brothers and sisters referred to were the cousins of Jesus Christ. This view is scripturally unsustainable. Since the words “son” and “mother” in the passages (Matthew 13: 55) were used in their natural and primary sense, it will be wrong to guess that the words “brother” and “sister” in the context have meanings different from their natural sense. If they were cousins the Bible would have so stated as it does in the case of Mary and Elizabeth. When the angel of God appeared to Mary, he said: “And, behold, thy COUSIN Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age...” (Luke 1: 36) And when Elisabeth had given birth to her son (John) the record says: “And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.” – Luke 1: 58.

James and John, the apostles, were also brothers in the flesh. As to how they were called by Jesus Christ it is written: “And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.” (Matthew 4: 21) They were also of the same mother as shown in Matthew 20: 20-23. From this account we can very well understand the sort of relationship or brotherhood meant in reference to the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ.

#### Blood Relations

Another opinion of those who are trying desperately to maintain that Mary is a virgin forever, is that the brethren of Jesus Christ mentioned in the passages of the Gospels were his disciples. This view is also erroneous. Those brethren of Jesus Christ were his blood relations-brothers in flesh. In the days of Christ on earth they were mostly found in company with Mary. On one occasion when Jesus was addressing a crowd, his mother and brothers came and stood outside, wanting to talk with him. Someone told him: "Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee." He knew that some of his brothers in the flesh did not believe in him and he was displeased with Mary for showing such disregard for his ministry by coming to interrupt his address. So, he turned to the man who brought the message and said: "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?" And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." – Matthew 12: 46-50.

This text clearly shows the distinction between the disciples of Christ and his fleshly brothers. The fact that he pointed to his disciples explains that his brethren who were outside the crowd were not among his disciples. In John 2: 12, it is written: "After this he (Jesus) went down to Capernaum, *he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples...*" Here again his brethren were distinguished from his disciple. This further confirms that the brethren of Jesus were his blood relations and not his disciples.

What is more, it is categorically stated in the Scriptures that the brethren of Jesus Christ under discussion did not believe in him; and so the point of their being his disciples does not arise in that his disciples were his followers and believers. In John 7: 2-5, it is written: "Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest...For neither did his brethren believe in him."

*Well, if the brethren were his disciples they would not have told him to go to Judaea so that his disciples might see his works. This shows that they themselves were not his disciples.* If any doubt about this still remains it must be dispelled outright by verse 5 of the text which reads: "FOR NEITHER DID HIS BRETHREN BELIEVE IN HIM." How could the brethren be his disciples and yet not believe in him? They were not; rather they were his brothers in the flesh born by Mary.

### Superstitions

Some people even worship Mary today just because she gave birth to Jesus Christ and they go as far as to saying that she was born without sin! We agree that Mary was a godly woman though she had her faults having been born in sin like David her sire and other human beings. (Psalm 51: 5; Romans 5: 12) She became the mother of Jesus as a matter of favour or grace from God. She too realised and confessed it. (Luke 1: 30,31, 38, 46-49) She therefore deserved ONLY the honour that was due to her but today certain religious people give her the glory and honour she did not deserve, and have associated her with gross superstitions!

Apart from the doctrine of "Mary's perpetual virginity", there are other obnoxious teachings about her such as the "Mother of God", "Immaculate Conception" and the "Assumption" which have no foundation in the Holy Scriptures. Alphonsus De' Linguori described Mary in his book, *The Glories of Mary*, at the "Mother of Almighty God"! And in an address to Mary, Anselm was quoted as saying: "O Lady, whatever all the Saints united with Thee, can obtain, Thou canst obtain alone... Thou art the Spouse of God; Thou art omnipotent Queen of Heaven and earth." Again he said: "Our Lord, O most holy Virgin, has exalted Thee to such a degree that by His favour all things that are possible to Him are possible to Thee." – *The Glories Of Mary*, Vol. 1, pages 89, 122 & 127.

This means that Mary is of equal status with the Lord. But God Almighty used St. Paul to say that of all things created, whether visible or invisible, Jesus Christ has "the preeminence." – Colossians 1: 12-19.

The danger in preaching false doctrines is explained in St. Paul's epistle to the Galatians. Said he: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed..." – Galatians 1: 8, 9; see also 1 Timothy 1: 3, 4; Ephesians 4: 14.

There is need to point out these things so that those who love truth and righteousness may not believe in lies which lead to destruction. (Isaiah. 9: 16; Matthew 15:12-14) we have many friends who ask us questions about doctrines such as this under discussion but as the truth must not be violated or adulterated (1 John 2:21) we have taken pains to bring out the facts about Jesus' fleshly brothers and Mary's virginity. Since the Bible says Mary gave birth to children after Jesus and does NOT say that Mary remained a virgin all her life, it is wrong and ungodly for anyone to mislead the people in the name of Christianity. "He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully...saith the Lord."