

THE FIRST GOSPEL OF THE INFANCY OF JESUS CHRIST

CHAPTER 1

1. Caiaphas relates that Jesus, when in his cradle, informed his mother that he was the Son of God. 5. Joseph and Mary going to Bethlehem to be taxed, Mary's time of bringing forth arrives, and she goes into a cave. 8. Joseph fetches in a Hebrew woman, the cave filled with great lights. 11. The infant born, 17. cures the woman, 19. arrival of the shepherds.

1. The following accounts we found in the book of Joseph the high-priest, called by some Caiaphas:

That Caiaphas was high-priest at the time of Christ's public ministry is confirmed by Matthew 26:3, Luke 3:2, John 11:49, 18:14, and Acts 4:6.

This Gospel had been received by the Gnostics, a sect of Christians in the second century. Ocobius de Castro mentions a Gospel of Thomas (there are several books with that title) which he says he saw and had translated to him by an Armenian Archbishop at Amsterdam, that was read in very many churches of Asia and Africa, as the only rule of their faith. Fabricius takes it to be this Gospel. However, it may be the Second Gospel of the Infancy, which is directly attributed to Thomas.

Ahmed Ibu Idris, a Mohammedan divine, says it was used by some Christians in common with the other four Gospels, and it has been supposed that Mohammed and his coadjutors used its fanciful accounts of Christ's childhood in compiling the Koran. The only "Christian" sources known to Mohammed were the Nestorians, who denied the real union between the divine and the human natures in Christ, thus virtually holding to two natures and two persons. Their founder, Nestorius, was removed in A.D. 431 from the Patriarchate of Constantinople as a heretic. He particularly disliked the expression "Mary, mother of God." The Church council at Chalcedon asserted the truth of the phrase with the significant addition "as to his humanity." The Church believes Christ had two natures in one person, and has decided over the ages that its belief in the Trinity and the two natures in Christ could never be explained, but only defined in such a way as to exclude heresies.

La Crosse cites a synod at Angamala, in the mountains of Malabar, A.D. 1599, which condemned this Gospel as still commonly read by the Nestorians in that country. This Gospel was first translated into English and published in 1697 by Henry Sike, Professor of Oriental Languages at Cambridge.

2. He relates that Jesus spoke even when he was in the cradle and said to his mother:

3. Mary, I am Jesus the Son of God, that word which you brought forth according to the declaration of the angel Gabriel to you, and my Father has sent me for the salvation of the world.

Verse 2 is the first of many examples why this Gospel was never accepted as canonical by the Church. However, some of its accounts were believed by prominent Christian leaders in the following ages such as Eusebius, Athanasius, Epiphanius, Chrysostom, etc.

In the Koran's section on Mary, Mohammed naturally gives a quite different version of Jesus' words: "She [Mary] made a sign to them, pointing to the child. But they replied: 'How can we speak with a babe in the cradle?' Whereupon he spoke and said: 'I am the servant of Allah. He has given me the Gospel and ordained me a prophet. His blessing is upon me wherever I go, and He had commanded me to be steadfast in prayer and to give alms to the poor as long as I shall live. He has exhorted me to honor my mother and has purged me of vanity and wickedness. I was blessed on the day I was born, and blessed I shall be on the day of my death; and may peace be upon me on the day when I shall be raised to life.' Such was Jesus, the son of Mary. That is the whole truth, which they [Jews] are unwilling to accept. Allah forbid that He Himself should beget a son!"

4. [New paragraph in the original] In the three hundred and ninth year of the era of Alexander, Augustus

published a decree that all persons should go to be taxed in their own country.

Inasmuch as the Jews were under Roman rule, not Greek, it is puzzling why the author considered it still the "era of Alexander." Alexander the Great became king of Macedonia in 336, put Palestine under the Greek empire in 333, and died in 323 B.C., so in any case, the author's arithmetic is wrong.

5. Joseph therefore arose, and with Mary his spouse he went to Jerusalem, and then came to Bethlehem so he and his family might be taxed in the city of his fathers.

6. And when they came by the cave, Mary confessed to Joseph that her time of bringing forth was come, and she could not go on to the city, and said, Let us go into this cave.

7. At that time the sun was very near going down.

That "the sun was very near to going down" is perhaps to emphasize the supernatural nature of the light.

8. But Joseph hurried away, that he might bring her a midwife; and when he saw an old Hebrew woman who was of Jerusalem, he said to her, Please come here, good woman, and go into that cave, and you will there see a woman just ready to bring forth.

9. It was after sunset, when the old woman and Joseph with her reached the cave, and they both went into it.

10. And behold, it was all filled with lights, greater than the light of lamps and candles, and greater than the light of the sun itself.

11. The infant was then wrapped up in swaddling clothes, and suckled at the breasts of his mother St. Mary.

12. When they both saw this light, they were surprised; the old woman asked St. Mary, Are you the mother of this child?

"St. Mary" was an appellation used by the Church later; more likely "our lady" (verse 17) was used at that time.

13. St. Mary replied that she was.

14. On which the old woman said, You are very different from all other women.

15. St. Mary answered, As there is not any child like to my son, so neither is there any woman like to his mother.

This is the reason for the Church's veneration (not worship) of Mary. The New Testament omits details of her later life because Christ is its focus above all else. The Church's homage to Mary is for the family of its faithful, preserved by tradition. She was present at the Crucifixion when Jesus commended John to take her to live with him (John 19:25-27), and she was with the Apostles in the upper room at Pentecost (Acts 1:14), so it can be inferred that she played an important but unrecorded role in the lives of the Apostles. She later lived at the Apostle John's home in Ephesus, and the mother of Christ undoubtedly would have been consulted on details of his life by Christians and non-Christians alike.

16. The old woman answered and said, O my Lady, I am come here that I may obtain an everlasting reward.

17. Then our Lady, St. Mary, said to her, Lay your hands upon the infant; which, when she had done, she became whole.

18. And as she was going forth, she said, From henceforth, all the days of my life, I will attend upon and be a servant of this infant.

19. After this, when the shepherds came and had made a fire, and they were exceedingly rejoicing, the heavenly host appeared to them, praising and adoring the supreme God.

20. And as the shepherds were engaged in the same employment, the cave at that time seemed like a glorious temple, because both the tongues of angels and men united to adore and magnify God on account of the birth of the Lord Christ.

21. But when the old Hebrew woman saw all these evident miracles, she gave praises to God and said, I thank you, O God of Israel, because my eyes have seen the birth of the Savior of the world.

CHAPTER 2

1. The child circumcised in the cave, 2. and the old woman preserving his foreskin or navel-string in a box of spikenard, Mary afterwards anoints Christ with it. 5. Christ brought to the temple, 6. shines, 7. angels stand around

him adoring. 8. Simeon praises Christ.

1. And when the time of his circumcision was come, namely, the eighth day, on which the law commanded the child to be circumcised, they circumcised him in the cave.

For circumcision commanded on the eighth day, see Genesis 17:10-12.

2. And the old Hebrew woman took the foreskin and preserved it in an alabaster-box of old oil of spikenard.

Some copies say the old woman preserved the navel-string, or umbilical cord, not the foreskin.

3. And she had a son who was a druggist, to whom she said, Take heed you sell not this alabaster box of spikenard-ointment, even if you are offered three hundred pence for it.

4. Now this is that alabaster-box which Mary the sinner procured, and poured forth the ointment out of it upon the head and the feet of our Lord Jesus Christ, and wiped it off with the hairs of her head.

This is more complete account than those in Matthew 26:7 and Mark 14:3, which say she poured the ointment on his head, and Luke 7:37, 38, which says she "washed his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment."

5. Then after ten days they brought him to Jerusalem, and on the fortieth day from his birth they presented him in the temple before the Lord, making the proper offerings for him, according to the requirement of the law of Moses: namely, that every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to God.

"And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present [him] to the Lord; (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." (Luke 2:22-24) However, the law of Moses (Exodus 13:1,2; Numbers 3:13) says "firstborn" males, not "every male." The rules governing the "days of purification" followed by the presentation of babes in the temple are in Leviticus 12.

6. At that time old Simeon saw him shining as a pillar of light, when St. Mary the Virgin, his mother, carried him in her arms, and Simeon was filled with the greatest pleasure at the sight.

Compare this "pillar of light" with the symbolism of God's presence in the pillars of cloud and fire in Exodus 13:21, 14:19, 16:10, 33:9, 40:36; Numbers 9:17, 10:11, 12:5, 16:42; Deuteronomy 1:33, 31:15; Nehemiah 9:12; Psalm 78:14, 105:36; Isaiah 4:5.

7. And the angels stood around him, adoring him, as a king's guards stand around him.

8. Then Simeon went near to St. Mary and stretched forth his hands towards her and said to the Lord Christ, Now, O my Lord, your servant shall depart in peace, according to your word;

9. For my eyes have seen your mercy, which you have prepared for the salvation of all nations; a light to all people, and the glory of your people Israel.

For an account of Simeon blessing Christ, see Luke 2:25.

10. Hannah the prophetess was also present, and drawing near, she gave praises to God, and celebrated the happiness of Mary.

Although this Hannah is not mentioned in the New Testament, many holy women were prophets, including Miriam, the sister of Moses (Exodus 15:20, 21), Deborah (Judges 4:4), Huldah (II Kings 22:14), Isaiah's wife (Isaiah 8:3), the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:46-55), and Anna (Luke 2:36-38).

CHAPTER 3

1. The wise men visit Christ. Mary gives them one of his swaddling clothes. 3. An angel appears to them in the form of

a star. They return and make a fire, and worship the swaddling cloth, and put it in the fire, where it remains unconsumed.

1. And it came to pass, when the Lord Jesus was born at Bethlehem, a city of Judaea, in the time of Herod the King; the wise men came from the East to Jerusalem, according to the prophecy of Zoradascht, and brought with them offerings: namely, gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and worshipped him, and offered to him their gifts.

The wise men, or Magi, who came from "the east," that is, outside Israel and probably from Persia, were scholars of their time. They were followers of Zoradascht, that is, Zoroaster, a Persian religious figure in the sixth or seventh century before Christ, who taught that Ahura Mazda created the universe. His divine nature was composed of two opposite (but not opposing) principles or forces, one constructive and beneficent, the other destructive and maleficent. These forces were conflicting only in name, for the resulting good or evil was brought about by the free agent, man.

(Zoroastrianism is often confused with Manicheanism, which was an absolute dualism of the leaders of darkness and light. Zoroastrianism was a mixture of old Babylonian and Oriental elements raised to the maximum; Manicheanism, condemned by the Church as a heresy, was Gnosticism with Christian elements reduced to a minimum, an Oriental dualism under Christian names.)

2. Then the Lady Mary took one of his swaddling clothes in which the infant was wrapped and gave it to them instead of a blessing, which they received from her as a most noble present.

Swaddling clothes were bands of cloth used to wrap infants. A similar custom is still used by North American Indians, who tightly wrap their babies (papooses) and carry them about bound to a board until they are two or more years old. This does not retard their muscular development, but actually aids it; their straining against the wrappings provides isometric exercise so they do not go through a "toddling" stage, but are ready to walk as soon as the practice is discontinued.

3. And at the same time there appeared to them an angel in the form of that star which had before been their guide in their journey; the light of which they followed till they returned into their own country.

If "an angel in the form of that star" seems a too facile explanation, nothing in astronomy accounts for the movements of the star. In any case, in ancient times a star signified a god, a deified king; see Numbers 24:17.

4. [New paragraph in the original] On their return their kings and princes came to them inquiring What had they seen and done? What sort of journey and return they had? What company they had on the road?

5. But they produced the swaddling cloth which St. Mary had given to them, and they made a great feast because of that.

6. According to the custom of their country, they made a fire and worshipped it.

7. And casting the swaddling cloth into it, the fire took it, and kept it.

8. And when the fire was put out, they took forth the swaddling cloth unhurt, as much as if the fire had not touched it.

9. Then they began to kiss it and put it on their heads and their eyes, saying, This is certainly an undoubted truth, and it is really surprising that the fire could not burn and consume it.

10. Then they took it, and with the greatest respect laid it up among their treasures.

Fire was a Zoroastrian symbol of the constructive force in the divine nature. Today's Zoroastrians are the Parsees; it would be interesting to know whatever happened to this miraculously imperishable cloth that "with the greatest respect was laid up among their treasures."

CHAPTER 4

1. Herod intends to put Christ to death. 3. An angel warns Joseph to take the child and its mother into Egypt. 6. Consternation on their arrival. 13. The idols fall down. 15. Mary washes Christ's swaddling clothes, and hang them to dry on a post. 16. A son of the chief priest puts one on his head, and being possessed of devils, they leave him.

1. Now Herod, perceiving that the wise men did delay and not return to him, called together the priests and

wise men and said, Tell me in what place the Christ should be born?

2. And when they replied, in Bethlehem, a city of Judaea, he began to contrive in his own mind the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Herod the Great, the king of Judea (37-4 B.C.), was an underling of Rome who knew little of Messianic prophecies. According to Matthew 2:4, he had to consult "the chief priests and scribes." The political and religious leaders of the Jews, the chief priests (which included the high-priest), seemed to have had no idea that the Messiah had been born. The scribes, high cabinet officers (II Kings 22, Jeremiah 36:10), seemed the ones who knew not only the Messiah was to be born, but where, from Micah 5:2.

3. But an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in his sleep and said, Arise, take the child and his mother, and go into Egypt as soon as the cock crows. So he arose, and went.

Compare with Matthew 2:13.

4. [New paragraph in the original] And as he was considering with himself about his journey, the morning came upon him.

5. In the length of the journey the girths of the saddle broke.

In a book that sometimes strains one's credulity, this is a nice touch of realism.

6. And now he drew near to a great city in which there was an idol, to which the other idols and gods of Egypt brought their offerings and vows.

7. And there was by this idol a priest ministering to it, who, as often as Satan spoke out of that idol, related the things he said to the inhabitants of Egypt and those countries.

This was the practice and belief of Egyptian idolaters; some early Christians seemed to accept their explanations, although attributing it to Satanic agency. For contrast, the Apocryphal book of Bel and the Dragon (said to be the first mystery story ever written) has the skeptical prophet Daniel setting a trap to expose the priest hidden inside such an idol.

8. This priest had a son three years old, who was possessed with a great multitude of devils, who uttered many strange things, and when the devils seized him, walked about naked with his clothes torn, throwing stones at those whom he saw.

9. Near to that idol was the inn of the city, into which when Joseph and St. Mary came and had turned into that inn, all the inhabitants of the city were astonished.

10. And all the magistrates and priests of the idols assembled before that idol and made inquiry there, saying, What means all this consternation and dread, which has fallen upon our country?

11. The idol answered them, The unknown God is come here, who is truly God; nor is there any one besides him who is worthy of divine worship; for he is truly the Son of God.

Compare New Testament examples (Matthew 8:29, Mark 1:24, 3:11; Luke 4:41, and Acts 19:15) of demons confessing Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, the Holy One, etc.

12. At the fame of him this country trembled, and at his coming it is under the present commotion and consternation; and we ourselves are affrighted by the greatness of his power.

13. And at the same instant this idol fell down, and at his fall all the inhabitants of Egypt, besides others, ran together.

The phrase "besides others" refers to non- Egyptians living there. Sozomen says he was told by many, and he credits their stories) of the idols in Egypt falling down on this occasion. Compare with: "...Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it." (Isaiah 19:1)

14. [New paragraph in the original] But the son of the priest, when his usual disorder came upon him, went into

the inn and there found Joseph and St. Mary, whom all the rest had left behind and forsook.

Just as Pharaoh was not persuaded by the miracles of Moses, neither did these Egyptians accept their own idol's testimony to Christ and believe; their reaction was to avoid Joseph and Mary.

**15. And when the Lady St. Mary had washed the swaddling clothes of the Lord Christ and had hanged them out to dry upon a post, the boy possessed with the devil took down one of them and put it upon his head.
16. And presently the devils began to come out of his mouth and fly away in the shape of crows and serpents.**

The idol had spoken; now the demons leave the priest's son out of his mouth. Crows and serpents seem to have had religious significance in Egyptian art; perhaps for this reason the fleeing demons are now depicted in these forms.

**17. From that time the boy was healed by the power of the Lord Christ, and he began to sing praises and give thanks to the Lord who had healed him.
18. When his father saw him restored to his former state of health, he said, My son, what has happened to you, and by what means were you cured?
19. The son answered, When the devils seized me, I went into the inn and there found a very handsome woman with a boy, whose swaddling clothes she just before had washed and hanged upon a post.
20. I took one of these and put it upon my head, and immediately the devils left me and fled away.
21. At this the father exceedingly rejoiced, and said, My son, perhaps this boy is the son of the living God, who made the heavens and the earth.**

Perhaps the priest is contrasting the "living God" with the idols he knows are not alive. This is the point of the canonical scriptures: "...they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god [that] cannot save." (Isaiah 46:20) "They [are] upright as the palm tree, but speak not: they must needs be borne, because they cannot go. Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil, neither also [is it] in them to do good." (Jeremiah 10:5) "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device." (Acts 17:29) "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things." (Romans 1:22, 23)

22. For as soon as he came among us, the idol was broken, and all the gods fell down and were destroyed by a greater power.

23. Then was fulfilled the prophecy which said, Out of Egypt I have called my son.

The Church considers Israel as often prefiguring Christ, hence the appeal to the prophecy: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." (Hosea 11:1)

CHAPTER 5

3. Joseph and Mary leave Egypt and go to the haunts of robbers, 4. who, hearing a mighty noise as of a great army, flee away.

**1. When Joseph and Mary heard that the idol was fallen down and destroyed, they were seized with fear and trembling, and said, When we were in the land of Israel, Herod, intending to kill Jesus, slew for that purpose all the infants at Bethlehem, and that neighborhood.
2. And there is no doubt that the Egyptians, if they come to hear that this idol is broken and fallen down, will burn us with fire.
3. They went away therefore to the secret places of robbers, who robbed travelers as they passed by of their carriages and their clothes, and carried them away bound.
4. These thieves upon their coming heard a great noise, such as the noise of a king with a great army and many horses, and the trumpets sounding at his departure from his own city; at which they were so affrighted as to leave all their booty behind them and fly away in haste.
5. Upon this the prisoners arose and loosed each other's bonds, and taking each man his bags, they went away, and saw Joseph and Mary coming towards them, and inquired, Where is that king, the noise of whose approach the robbers heard and left us, so that we are now safely away?
6. Joseph answered, He will come after us.**

Joseph's reply is evocative, but enigmatic.

CHAPTER 6

1. Mary looks on a woman in whom Satan had taken up his abode, and she becomes dispossessed. 5. Christ kissed by a bride made mute by sorcerers and cures her, 11. miraculously cures a gentlewoman in whom Satan had taken up his abode. 16. A leprous girl is cured by the water in which he was washed, and she becomes the servant of Mary and Joseph. 20. The leprous son of a prince's wife is cured in the same manner. 37. His mother offers large gifts to Mary and dismisses her.

1. Then they went into another city where there was a woman possessed with a devil, and in whom Satan, that cursed rebel, had taken up his abode.

In the beginning, "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good," including angels (Genesis 1:31), but all rational beings, corporeal and incorporeal, had a period of probation. "Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou" (Genesis 3:14) in the judgment on the serpent, seems to imply that Satan's day of grace was ended when he seduced man.

Apparently "Satan, that cursed rebel" influenced other angels to follow him: "Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker? Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly" (Job 4:17, 18); "angels when they sinned" (II Peter 2:4); "angels that kept not their own beginning, but left their proper habitation" (Jude 6); "And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." (Revelation 12:9); a literal reading of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:13 is "deliver us from the evil one" and we have the words of Jesus: "Ye are of your father the devil.... When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof" (John 8:44) and "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41).

2. One night, when she went to fetch water, she could neither endure her clothes on, nor to be in any house; but as often as they tied her with chains or cords, she broke them and went out into desert places, and sometimes standing where roads crossed and in the churchyards, would throw stones at men.

Although the Bible distinguishes between mental illness ("lunacy" in Matthew 4:24, 17:15) and demon possession, this type of behavior, which is not unknown in psychotic patients today, here and in the canonical Scriptures is attributed to Satanic or demonic influence.

3. When St. Mary saw this woman, she pitied her; whereupon Satan presently left her and fled away in the form of a young man, saying, Woe to me, because of you, Mary, and your son.

Canonical Scriptures never depict demons in any form.

4. So the woman was delivered from her torment; but considering herself naked, she blushed and avoided seeing any man, and after putting on her clothes, she went home and gave an account of her case to her father and relations, who, as they were the best of the city, entertained St. Mary and Joseph with the greatest respect. 5. The next morning, after having received a sufficient supply of provisions for the road, they went from them, and about the evening of the day arrived at another town, where a marriage was then about to be solemnized; but by the arts of Satan and the practices of some sorcerers, the bride was become so mute that she could not so much as open her mouth.

Sorcery is mentioned in Deuteronomy 18:10, II Kings 17:17, 21:6, Isaiah 47:9, Malachi 3:5, Acts 8:11, Revelation 18:23, 21:8, and 22:15. (Interestingly, the Greek word in the last two verses cited means "to enchant by means of drugs.")

6. But when this mute bride saw the Lady St. Mary entering into the town and carrying the Lord Christ in her arms, she stretched out her hands to the Lord Christ and took him in her arms, and closely hugging him, very

often kissed him, continually moving him and pressing him to her body.

7. Straightway the string of her tongue was loosed, and her ears were opened, and she began to sing praises to God, who had restored her.

She had become both deaf and mute, as indicated by the words her "ears were opened."

8. So there was great joy among the inhabitants of the town that night, who thought that God and his angels were come down among them.

9. [New paragraph in the original] In this place they abode three days, meeting with the greatest respect and most splendid entertainment.

10. And being then furnished by the people with provisions for the road, they departed and went to another city, in which they were inclined to lodge, because it was a famous place.

11. There was in this city a gentlewoman, who, as she went down one day to the river to bathe, behold cursed Satan leaped upon her in the form of a serpent,

12. And folded himself about her belly, and every night lay upon her.

13. This woman seeing the Lady St. Mary, and the Lord Christ the infant in her bosom, asked the Lady St. Mary that she would give her the child to kiss and carry in her arms.

14. When she had consented, and as soon as the woman had moved the child, Satan left her and fled away, nor did the woman ever afterwards see him.

15. Hereupon all the neighbors praised the Supreme God, and the woman rewarded them with ample beneficence.

16. On the morrow the same woman brought perfumed water to wash the Lord Jesus; and when she had washed him, she preserved the water.

17. And there was a girl there, whose body was white with a leprosy, who being sprinkled with this water, and washed, was instantly cleansed from her leprosy.

Usage of the word "leprosy" in ancient times may not always coincide with our modern definition of leprosy or Hansen's disease, a chronic communicable (but not highly contagious) illness affecting the skin, flesh, and nerves, characterized by white scaly scabs, skin ulcers, and deformities. To understand the fear aroused by a white spot on the skin, see Leviticus 13. (In the New Testament, leprosy primarily means scaly or scabbed.)

18. The people therefore said, Without doubt Joseph and Mary and that boy are Gods, for they do not look like mortals.

19. And when they were making ready to go away, the girl, who had been troubled with the leprosy, came and desired they would permit her to go along with them; so they consented, and the girl went with them till they came to a city, in which was the palace of a great king, and whose house was not far from the inn.

20. Here they stayed, and when the girl went one day to the prince's wife, and found her in a sorrowful and mournful condition, she asked her the reason of her tears.

21. She replied, Wonder not at my groans, for I am under a great misfortune, of which I dare not tell anyone.

22. But, said the girl, if you will entrust me with your private grievance, perhaps I may find you a remedy for it.

23. You, therefore, says the prince's wife, will keep the secret and not discover it to a living person!

24. I have been married to this prince, who rules as king over large dominions, and lived long with him before he had any child by me.

25. At length I conceived by him, but alas! I brought forth a leprous son; which, when he saw, he would not own to be his, but said to me,

26. Either do you kill him, or send him to some nurse in such a place that he may be never heard of; and now take care of yourself; I will never see you more.

27. So here I pine, lamenting my wretched and miserable circumstances. Alas, my son! Alas, my husband! Have I disclosed it to you?

28. The girl replied, I have found a remedy for your disease, which I promise you, for I also was leprous, but God has cleansed me, even he who is called Jesus, the son of the Lady Mary.

29. The woman inquiring where that God was, whom she spake of, the girl answered, He lodges with you here in the same house.

30. But how can this be? she said; Where is he? Behold, replied the girl, Joseph and Mary, and the infant who is

with them is called Jesus is he who delivered me from my disease and torment.

31. But by what means, she said, were you cleansed from your leprosy? Will you not tell me that?

32. Why not? said the girl: I took the water with which his body had been washed and poured it upon me, and my leprosy vanished.

33. The prince's wife then arose and entertained them, providing a great feast for Joseph among a large company of men.

34. And the next day took perfumed water to wash the Lord Jesus, and afterwards poured the same water upon her son, whom she had brought with her, and her son was instantly cleansed from his leprosy.

35. Then she sang thanks and praises to God, and said, Blessed is the mother that gave birth to you, O Jesus!

36. Do you thus cure men of the same nature with yourself, and with the water with which your body is washed?

The woman's question, "Do you thus cure men of the same nature with yourself?" touches on a profound mystery of the Christian faith. The Nicene Creed reads: "I believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible: and in one Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, the only-begotten. Begotten of his Father before all worlds; Light of Light, Very God of very God, begotten, not made; being of one Essence with the Father; by whom all things were made; Who, for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man..."

The Church's doctrine of Christ's two natures in one person, like the Trinity, cannot be explained. The union of the two natures in Christ's person is necessarily inscrutable, because there are no analogies to it in our experience and any attempts to illuminate it eventually become misleading. The attributes and powers of both natures are ascribed to the one Christ, and conversely the works and dignities of the one Christ are ascribed to either of the natures, in a way inexplicable, except upon the principle that these two natures are organically and indissolubly united in a single person. (Examples of the former usage are Romans 1:2 and 1 Peter 3:18; of the latter in 1 Timothy 2:5 and Hebrews 1:2, 3). Christ was not merely a man of God, or half man and half God, but the utterly unique God-man.

37. She then offered very large gifts to the Lady Mary, and sent her away with all imaginable respect.

CHAPTER 7

1. A man who could not enjoy his wife is freed from his disorder. 5. A young man who had been bewitched, and turned into a mule, miraculously cured by Christ being put on his back, 28. and is married to the girl who had been cured of leprosy.

1. They came afterwards to another city and had a mind to lodge there.

2. Accordingly they went to a man's house, who was newly married, but by the influence of sorcerers could not enjoy his wife:

That the man "could not enjoy his wife" is a euphemism for either impotence, premature ejaculation, or a "loss of libido." A psycho-sexual or psychosomatic condition is implied by its having been precipitated by sorcery.

3. But by them lodging at his house that night, the man was freed of his disorder.

No swaddling clothes or wash-water this time, but simply a healing presence.

4. And when they were preparing early in the morning to go forward on their journey, the new married person hindered them and provided a noble entertainment for them.

5. But going forward the next morning, they came to another city and saw three women going from a certain grave with great weeping.

6. When St. Mary saw them, she spoke to the girl who was their companion, saying, Go and inquire of them, what is the matter with them, and what misfortune has befallen them?

7. When the girl asked them, they made her no answer, but asked her again, Who are you, and where are you going? For the day is far spent, and the night is at hand.

8. We are travelers, said the girl, and are seeking an inn to lodge at.

9. They replied, Go along with us, and lodge with us.

10. They then followed them and were introduced into a new house, well furnished with all sorts of furniture.

Humbler homes had minimal furnishings; the abundance of furniture here was worth remarking.

11. It was now winter-time, and the girl went into the parlor where these women were and found them weeping and lamenting as before.

12. By them stood a mule, covered over with silk, and an ebony collar hanging down from his neck, whom they kissed, and were feeding.

13. The girl said, How handsome, ladies, that mule is! They replied with tears, This mule, which you see, was our brother, born of this same mother as we:

14. For when our father died and left us with a very large estate, we had only this brother, and we endeavored to procure him a suitable match and thought he should be married as other men, some giddy and jealous woman bewitched him without our knowledge.

15. And we, one night, a little before day, while the doors of the house were all fast shut, saw our brother was changed into a mule, such as you now see him to be:

16. And we, in the melancholy condition in which you see us, having no father to comfort us, have applied to all the wise men, magicians, and diviners in the world, but they have been of no service to us.

17. And often therefore as we find ourselves oppressed with grief, we rise and go with this our mother to our father's tomb, where, when we have cried sufficiently, we return home.

18. When the girl had heard this, she said, Take courage, and cease your fears, for you have a remedy for your afflictions near at hand, even among you and in the midst of your house,

19. For I was also leprous; but when I saw this woman and this little infant with her, whose name is Jesus, I sprinkled my body with the water with which his mother had washed him, and I was presently made well.

20. And I am certain that he is also capable of relieving you under your distress. Wherefore, arise, go to Mary, my mistress, and when you have brought her into your own parlor, disclose to her the secret, at the same time earnestly beseeching her to have compassion on your case.

21. As soon as the women had heard the girl's discourse, they hurried away to the Lady St. Mary, introduced themselves to her, and, sitting down before her, they wept.

22. And said, O our Lady St. Mary, pity your handmaids, for we have no head of our family, and no one older than us; no father, or brother to go in and out before us.

23. But this mule, which you see, was our brother, which some woman by witchcraft has brought into this condition which you see; we therefore entreat you to take compassion on us.

24. Hereupon St. Mary was grieved at their case, and taking the Lord Jesus, put him upon the back of the mule.

25. And said to her son, O Lord Jesus Christ, restore (or heal) according to your extraordinary power this mule, and grant him to have again the shape of a man and a rational creature, as he had formerly.

26. This was scarcely said by the Lady St. Mary before the mule immediately passed into a human form and became a young man without any deformity.

This "bewitchment" into the form of a mule is thoroughly beyond belief, yet its very inclusion requires reflection. It must have been meaningful in a way that escapes a modern mind. Did those who heard this story believe it literally happened? Could the author have seriously intend for anyone to take it literally? Why was it not deleted by some later copyist? It resembles a Persian fable in which what is said is not what is meant. It is another example why this book was never accepted as canonical in its entirety.

27. Then he and his mother and the sisters worshipped the Lady St. Mary, and lifting the child upon their heads, they kissed him and said, Blessed is your mother, O Jesus, O Savior of the world! Blessed are the eyes which are so happy as to see you.

28. Then both the sisters told their mother, Our brother truly is restored to his former shape by the help of the Lord Jesus Christ and the kindness of that girl who told us of Mary and her son.

29. And inasmuch as our brother is unmarried, it is fitting that we marry him to this girl their servant.

30. When they had consulted Mary in this matter and she had given her consent, they made a splendid wedding for this girl.

31. And so their sorrow having turned into gladness and their mourning into mirth, they began to rejoice and to make merry and sing, being dressed in their richest attire, with bracelets.

Their "richest attire, with bracelets" was worth mentioning, for bracelets (which were worn by both men and women) indicated wealth and status: in seeking a wife for Isaac, the servant of Abraham bought Rebecca two bracelets (Genesis 24:22); Tamar accepted bracelets as an exorbitant pledge for a lamb (Genesis 38:18); the children of Israel offered gold bracelets to Aaron to pay for his priestly garments and tabernacle adornments (Exodus 35:22); soldiers brought bracelets as battle booty and offered them to Moses (Numbers 31:50); an Amalekite brought Saul's crown and bracelet to convince David he had been slain in battle (II Samuel 1:10).

32. Afterwards they glorified and praised God, saying, O Jesus son of David who changes sorrow into gladness, and mourning into mirth!

33. After this Joseph and Mary remained there ten days, then went away, having received great respect from those people;

34. Who, when they took their leave of them and returned home, cried,

35. But especially the girl.

CHAPTER 8

1. Joseph and Mary pass through a country infested by robbers. 3. Titus, a humane thief, offers Dumachus, his comrade, forty groats to let Joseph and Mary pass unmolested. 6. Jesus prophesies that the thieves, Dumachus and Titus, shall be crucified with him, and that Titus shall go before him into Paradise. 10. Christ causes a well to spring from a sycamore tree, and Mary washes his coat in it. 11. A balsam grows there from his sweat. They go to Memphis, where Christ works more miracles. Return to Judaea. 15. Being warned, they depart for Nazareth.

1. In their journey from there they came into a desert country and were told it was infested with robbers; so Joseph and St. Mary prepared to pass through it in the night.

2. And as they were going along, behold they saw two robbers asleep in the road, and with them a great number of robbers who were their confederates, also asleep.

3. The names of these two were Titus and Dumachus; and Titus said to Dumachus, I implore you, let these persons go along quietly, so that our company may not perceive anything of them:

4. But Dumachus refused, and Titus again said, I will give you forty groats, and as a pledge take my girdle, which he gave him before he had done speaking, so that he might not open his mouth or make a noise.

5. When the Lady St. Mary saw the kindness which this robber showed them, she said to him, The Lord God will receive you to his right hand and grant you pardon of your sins.

6. Then the Lord Jesus answered and said to his mother, When thirty years are expired, O mother, the Jews will crucify me at Jerusalem;

7. And these two thieves shall be with me at the same time upon the cross, Titus on my right hand, and Dumachus on my left, and from that time Titus shall go before me into paradise:

Other noncanonical books do not agree on the names of the two thieves crucified with Christ.

8. And when she said, God forbid this should be your lot, O my son, they went on to a city in which were several idols, which as soon as they came near to it, was turned into hills of sand.

9. [New paragraph in the oldest extant manuscripts] From here they went to that sycamore tree, which is now called Matarea;

10. And in Matarea the Lord Jesus caused a well to spring forth, in which St. Mary washed his coat;

11. And a balsam is produced, or grows, in that country from the sweat which ran down there from the Lord Jesus.

Sozomen reports an Egyptian story of Christ making a well to wash his clothes in a sycamore tree, from which balsam afterwards proceeded.

Chemnitius, out of Stipulensis, who had it from Peter Martyr, Bishop of Alexandria in the third century, said that the place in Egypt where Christ was banished was still then called Matarea, about ten miles beyond Cairo, and that the inhabitants constantly burned a lamp in remembrance of it; and that there was a garden of trees yielding a balsam, believed planted by Christ when a boy.

12. Thence they proceeded to Memphis, and saw Pharaoh, and abode three years in Egypt.

13. And the Lord Jesus did very many miracles in Egypt, which are neither to be found in the Gospel of the Infancy nor in the Gospel of Perfection.

The Gospel of Perfection is not extant today. John said at the end of his Gospel that it does not contain all of Christ's miracles, and here the author of the First Gospel of the Infancy says the same of those miracles when he was a small child in Egypt. Oral transmission may have added some fanciful exaggerations that were recorded in non-canonical books, but the accounts had a factual basis. The point made here and in the Gospel of John is that there was no need to fabricate any stories of miracles because Christ performed so many.

14. [New paragraph in the oldest extant manuscripts] At the end of three years he returned out of Egypt, and when he came near to Judaea, Joseph was afraid to enter;

15. For upon hearing that Herod was dead and that Archelaus his son reigned in his stead, he was afraid;

Herod the Great died in 4 B.C., so the dating of Christ's birth on which the A.D. ("Anno Domini," Latin for "in the year of the Lord") calendar was based is off by several years.

There are several Herods in the New Testament. At the death of Herod the Great, his kingdom was divided between his sons. Archelaus reigned in Judea (mentioned in Matthew 2:22) and Samaria; Herod Antipas was made Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea and ruled for about thirty years (it was he who killed John the Baptist at the instigation of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife); Herod Philip II ruled Ituraea, Gaulonitis, Trachonitis, etc. (Herod Agrippa I, son of Aristobulus, succeeded his uncle, Herod Philip II, as Tetrarch of those areas. Herod Agrippa II, son of Herod Agrippa I, was king of Chalcis, Ituraea, Trachonitis, and Abilene.)

16. And when he went to Judaea, an angel of God appeared to him and said, O Joseph, go into the city Nazareth and abide there.

17. It is strange indeed that he, who is the Lord of all countries, should be thus carried backward and forward through so many countries.

CHAPTER 9

2. Two sick children cured by water wherein Christ was washed.

1. When they came afterwards into the city Bethlehem, they found there several very desperate distempers, which became so troublesome to children that most of them died.

2. There was there a woman who had a sick son, whom she brought, when he was at the point of death, to the Lady St. Mary, who saw her when she was washing Jesus Christ.

3. Then said the woman, O my Lady Mary, look down upon this my son, who is afflicted with most dreadful pains.

4. St. Mary heard her and said, Take a little of that water with which I have washed my son, and sprinkle it upon him.

5. Then she took a little of that water, as St. Mary had commanded, and sprinkled it upon her son, who being wearied with his violent pains, had fallen asleep; and after he had slept a little, awakened perfectly well and recovered.

6. The mother being abundantly glad of this success, went again to St. Mary, and St. Mary said to her, Give praise to God, who has cured this your son.

7. There was in the same place another woman, a neighbor of her whose son was now cured.

8. This woman's son was afflicted with the same disease, and his eyes were now almost quite shut, and she was lamenting for him day and night.

9. The mother of the child which was cured, said to her, Why do you not bring your son to St. Mary, as I brought my son to her when he was in the agonies of death, and he was cured by that water with which the body of her son Jesus was washed?

10. When the woman heard her say this, she also went, and having procured the same water, washed her son with it, whereupon his body and his eyes were instantly restored to their former state.

11. And when she brought her son to St. Mary and opened his case to her, she commanded her to give thanks

to God for the recovery of her son's health and tell no one what had happened.

CHAPTER 10

1. Two wives of one man each have a son sick. 2. One of them, named Mary, and whose son's name was Caleb, presents the Virgin with a handsome carpet, and Caleb is cured; but the son of the other wife dies, 4. which occasions a difference between the women. 5. The other wife puts Caleb into a hot oven, but he is miraculously preserved; 9. She afterwards throws him into a well, and he is again preserved; 11. his mother appeals to the Virgin against the other wife, 12. whose downfall the Virgin prophesies, 13. and who accordingly falls into the well, 14. thereby fulfilling a saying of old.

1. There were in the same city two wives of one man, who had each a sick son. One of them was called Mary and her son's name was Caleb.

2. She arose, and taking her son, went to the Lady St. Mary, the mother of Jesus, and offered her a very handsome carpet, saying, O my Lady Mary, accept this carpet of me, and instead of it give me a small swaddling cloth.

3. To this Mary agreed, and when the mother of Caleb was gone, she made a coat for her son of the swaddling cloth. She put it on him, and his disease was cured; but the son of the other wife died.

4. [New paragraph here in the oldest extant manuscripts] Hereupon there arose between them a dispute about doing the business of the family by turns, each in her week.

5. And when the turn of Mary the mother of Caleb came, and she was heating the oven to bake bread and went away to fetch the meal, she left her son Caleb by the oven;

6. Whom, the other wife, her rival, seeing to be by himself, took and cast him into the oven, which was very hot, and then went away.

The terrible deeds of this woman would seem exaggerated, were it not for appalling examples of infanticide and child abuse in our own times.

7. Mary on her return saw her son Caleb lying in the midst of the oven laughing and the oven quite as cold as though it had not been heated before, and knew that her rival the other wife had thrown him into the fire.

8. When she took him out, she brought him to the Lady St. Mary and told her the story, to whom she replied, Be quiet, I am concerned lest you should make this matter known.

9. After this her rival, the other wife, as she was drawing water at the well, and saw Caleb playing by the well and that no one was near, took him and threw him into the well.

10. And when some men came to fetch water from the well, they saw the boy sitting on the surface of the water, and drew him out with ropes and were exceedingly surprised at the child, and praised God.

11. Then came the mother and took him and carried him to the Lady St. Mary, lamenting and saying, O my Lady, see what my rival has done to my son, and how she has cast him into the well, and I do not question but one time or other she will be the occasion of his death.

12. St. Mary replied to her, God will vindicate your injured cause.

13. Accordingly a few days after, when the other wife came to the well to draw water, her foot was entangled in the rope, so that she fell headlong into the well, and they who ran to her assistance found her skull broken, and bones bruised.

14. So she came to a bad end, and in her was fulfilled that saying of the author, They dug a well, and made it deep, but fell themselves into the pit which they prepared.

Compare with: "Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit..." (Proverbs 28:10)

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