

THE CARPENTER OF NAZARETH.

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AMONG those who have not thought to question the existence of a Galilean teacher, known to later time as Jesus, there must be some who have frequently asked themselves most seriously if after all this man's original name has not been lost. Was the name "Jesus" the name given him at birth? Was it the name which he bore in childhood and by which he was known as he began to associate with his fellows as a man among men? We raise this question, not in any spirit of hostility or of irreverence, but frankly and sincerely. We feel that we are bound to do this, that modern criticism has reached the point where it must face the question of the historicity of the Nazarene and that the question here raised has an important bearing upon that. There are a few considerations that should seem worthy of serious attention.

In the story of the annunciation found in Luke i. 28 ff. the angel is represented as saying to the young maiden Mary: "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus." And in Luke ii. 21 we read that upon the eighth day when the child was circumcised this son of Mary was called Jesus, and that he was so named by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. Unquestionably we have here an allusion to Luke i. 31. Turning to Matthew we find we are told that an angel appeared to Joseph encouraging him to take Mary, his betrothed, to wife, though she is with child, because that which is conceived of her is of the Holy Spirit. The angel is made to add: "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call him Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins" (See i. 20 f.). In i. 25 we are told that Joseph, who had then taken Mary to wife, upon the birth of her first-born son, called his name Jesus.

That the two accounts here found in the "Gospel of the infancy" passages of Matthew and Luke as to the naming of the son

of Mary contradict one another we are hardly warranted in saying, although they seem to be parts of independent legends. We, however, may feel that scholars are not justified in asserting that they are perfectly harmonious and at the same time supplementary, that Matt. i. 20 f. follows Luke 1. 31, while Matt. i. 25 is not contradicted by Luke ii. 21 which follows Luke i. 31. What we are interested to notice is that they have little, if any, worth to the student of the life of the Nazarene, for they undoubtedly were later than the Gospels at the opening of which they were put. At the most we can only say that when the legendary "Gospel of the infancy" took shape it was very generally supposed that the name "Jesus," by which the Nazarene was then known, was the name that was bestowed upon him at birth or shortly thereafter.

The name "Jesus" is recognized as virtually the same as the Hebrew "Joshua," a common name in Old Testament story. True, it really is not the earlier and usual form but a later and less common form, "Jeshua," and might be rendered "Jesu." The Greek form of the name seems to be responsible for the final *s*. The earlier Hebrew form has not the force of "deliverer" or "saviour"; rather does it suggest that the bearer is "helped of Yahveh." The later form is from a Hebrew verb meaning "to deliver," "to save." Hence "Jeshua" was taken by a free etymology to have the signification of "deliverer" or "saviour" to those who knew and followed the Nazarene.

Scholars who look with less favor upon the material in Matthew and Luke having to do with the birth and infancy of the Master than the later synoptic material may question not unreasonably whether the Carpenter of Nazareth really was called "Jesus" before he had a considerable following in Galilee. After once he had, as the foe of a dead ceremonialism, a dreary legalism, and a hypocritical faith, stirred up all Galilee with his winsome doctrine of the Kingdom of God it is fairly supposable, even if he had not been so known before, that this carpenter would now be enthusiastically proclaimed as their deliverer, that is, as their Jesus.

It is said in Mark vi. 1-3 that when he came into his own country with his disciples and began to teach in the synagogue many hearing him marveled and asked: "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" In Matt. xiii. 55 the form of the question differs somewhat, but it is substantially in harmony with this. If Mark vi. 1-3 is the older and more reliable form, as seems likely, then we may say that this Galilean had already become known in his home community, and presumably outside of it in Galilee, as "the Car-

penter." Certainly the supposition that he was so known seems probable. If this was the case and if afterward, as his ministry increased in popularity, he were given the most appropriate designation of "Jesus" (Deliverer), we may very reasonably ask if his real name was not lost or ignored as of no particular consequence. Had he been named after his father, as it is likely he was, his name "Joseph" ("whom Yahveh increases") would have no particular significance to his enthusiastic followers, while the term "Jesus" would have.

A partial solution, if not the key to the problem, may be found in Josephus. Galilee in the time of Roman domination was in a state of constant revolt. The people were free, liberty-loving and fearless, though sadly wanting unity. Earnest patriots as partisan zealots and many less nobly endowed were able to secure a few hundred followers here and there and give the Romans, if opportunity offered, no little trouble. The book of the Acts is in agreement with Josephus just here.¹ But the thing to be noticed is that according to the latter several of these men were known by the name of Jesus.

While it may be admitted that the name "Jesus" is one which we would naturally expect to encounter often in Jewish story the fact that a considerable number of leading Galilean patriot leaders, who seem to have led their separate companies in revolt against the Romans, or to have been guilty as outlaws of lawlessness near the beginning of the Christian era, bore the name of "Jesus" is specially significant; for in the mind of the masses the Nazarene carpenter must have been associated with the thought of unfriendliness to the government. The gospels are not without marks of this. Turning to Josephus we see that a Jesus, son of Sapphias, as a leader of a seditious tumult of mariners and poor people, is mentioned in his *Life*.² Another Jesus is named by Josephus as a man who came against him with eight hundred men and fought him and his forces (*Life*, sec. 22). He is said to have been a captain of robbers; but it is to be surmised that the Jewish historian is hardly fair in so characterizing him. It is presumable that he was an acknowledged patriot leader in Galilee among its most reputable people. Josephus also speaks of a Jesus, son of Shaphat, the principal head of a band of outlaws who were potent men among the seditious who troubled Valerian. Here we encounter another patriot (*Wars of the Jews*, III, IX, 7 and 8). It is likely that there were a goodly number of

¹ See Acts v. 36 f.; viii. 9 ff. Cf. Dr. Carus's *The Pleroma*, p. 43 f.

² See sec. 12; cf. sec. 27; see also Graetz's *Hist. of the Jews*, Vol. II, p. 274.

others who were popularly known by the same title "Jesus." That the original names of these men were lost or forgotten when they were given the name "Jesus" by some of their zealous followers is what might have been expected.

This supposition has an important bearing upon the question whether the carpenter of Nazareth was not one whose real name, given at circumcision, was unknown to the people of Galilee. Shortly after he began to attract attention as a carpenter who had a message of good cheer for them they may have seen fit to speak of him as "Jesus," a designation that was at once accepted even by many who did not themselves follow him. Ardently responsive as these eager lovers of liberty were they were bound as patriots, galled by a foreign yoke, to look to him as a deliverer.

There was nothing about the trade of the Nazarene, though he was poor, to stand in his way or to lower him in their eyes. Trades were held in honor among them. Their great rabbis were men who had their trades and prided themselves therein. The only thing that concerned them was whether this Nazarene could enthuse and rally the masses as a patriot leader. That he could seemed to them apparent by his successes. Hence to many of them none was better fitted than he to be known as "Jesus."

The name thus thrust upon the Nazarene clung to him. Except by members of his own family and his closest followers he was known by no other. Naturally the name clung to him because up to the last week of his life the Galileans had hopes of him as their deliverer. As however their hopes faded when the Nazarene was apprehended and crucified the nearer circle of his followers took it up as most appropriate because to them the spiritual nature of his mission came to stand out so clearly that they saw that none so truly deserved it as did he.

We should not overlook the fact that nowhere in the Synoptic Gospels are the disciples represented as addressing their loved Master as "Jesus." To them he was *rabbi* (teacher) and *adthonai* (Master). While in some passages, as Mark ix, 5; xi. 21; xiv. 45, we have the Greek transliteration of the former, in others, as Mark iv. 38; xiii. 1; Luke viii. 24; ix. 33, we have Greek equivalents for the latter. The more common Greek equivalent *kurios*, found in Matt. ix. 28; xiv. 28; Luke v. 8; ix. 54, etc., is also frequently used for *adthonai*; but unfortunately by our Trinitarian translators appears in the English texts of the Synoptic Gospels as "Lord" where we should have "sir" or "Master." Surely neither of these terms, *rabbi* or *adthonai*, as used by the disciples, was anything more than a

term of respect. They contained no connotations of deity. Yet these were the only terms, if we may judge from the Synoptic Gospels, that were used by the disciples in addressing Jesus or in alluding to him.

Nor was the Nazarene ever represented as alluding to himself as "Jesus." Some ancient authorities have: "Then charged he the disciples that they should let no man know that he was Jesus the Christ"; but most reputable scholars to-day fail to find sufficient warrant for retaining the "Jesus" here. If retained it should be recognized as an official rather than a personal term. Hence it would have little significance for this study.

The gospels in thus representing the disciples and their loved teacher as using other terms for him than "Jesus" should be accepted as true to early tradition. The fact has an important bearing upon my thought that somewhere midway in his ministry, if not earlier, in Galilee this teacher became known to most of his followers, if not to his intimates, as "Jesus." Presumably his immediate disciples were slow to adopt this term which the masses accepted enthusiastically in the thought that he was to deliver them somehow from the thralldom of Rome. After his death, if not before, his closest and most devoted followers must have allowed the thought of him as their "Deliverer" or "Saviour" to grip their minds and hearts. However seriously we as students of the New Testament may question the thought that the Great Galilean was known in his early years as "Jesus," we certainly can see no reason for refusing him that title to-day. Though he may be shorn of much that has been claimed for him as a teacher and an actor upon life's little stage, we shall cling to the name by which for over eighteen centuries he has been affectionately known.

The material which has been handled in this paper, as we are well aware, has in whole or in part been used to suggest the conclusion that there was no such person as Jesus, that he was not an historic character. Even a prominent orthodox divine³ in asserting that the Christian church is founded upon the Christ-God idea frankly admits that we cannot be sure that there was a human Jesus, that it is enough for the church that it has the thought of God as coming into touch with life and the closely correlated thought of him as suffering to redeem man. It seems to the writer that a fresh and more fearless handling of the text of the Synoptic Gospels than critical scholars have heretofore given us must put us in touch

³ Rev. K. C. Anderson in the *Hibbert Journal* of January, 1910, on "The Collapse of Liberal Christianity."

with an actual Nazarene, a man who when seen as he was may disappoint us in some respects but who must still be regarded as one of the most original and inspiring religious teachers the world has thus far seen.