THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF JESUS.

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HAD I known that all the points of my “pièce de résistance,” as Prof. W. B. Smith terms it in his article “The Humanity of Jesus?” (Open Court, July, 1912), are so little known, I would have written this article right away instead of writing my protest in The Open Court of May, 1912. Dr. Smith has hardly grazed the question of the brotherhood of James and the other brothers of Jesus. I would therefore submit all these points now clearly and distinctly.

1. In Matt. i. 25 Joseph is plainly said not to have had sexual intercourse with Mary until she had given birth to her firstborn son Jesus, just as the same thing was said of Plato’s father Ariston according to Diogenes Laertius (III. 22), that “he preserved his marriage with Perictione pure” until she had given birth to Plato, the son of Apollo. According to all logic the word “first-born” means that if Jesus was the first-born son of Mary, he was not her only child. All the twistings of the churchfathers in the interest of the perpetual virginity of Mary, that first-born means the first and only cannot get around this fact. The acute critic Lucian, the satirist of paganism and Christianity alike, is right when he says of Agathocles (Demonax 29): “If first, not the only; if the only, not the first.”

2. According to Matt. xiii. 56 etc. Mary had four sons besides Jesus, and some daughters. The fellow townsmen of Jesus in Nazareth say: “Is this one not the son of the carpenter? Is not his mother called Mary and his brothers James and Joses and Simon and

1 πρωτότοκος.
2 δεν καθαρον γάμον φυλάξαι εως τῆς ἀποκλήσεως.
3 πρώτος καὶ μόνος. Theophylact, Enthymius, Zigabenus etc.
4 ei μὲν πρώτος, οὐ μόνος. ei δὲ μόνος, οὐ πρώτος.
Judas? And his sisters are they not all with us? From whence has he all this?” (namely his wisdom and his power).

3. In Mark iii. 21 we read: “And when his own people (i. e., his blood relations\(^5\)) heard about the work of Jesus in Capernaum, they went out to lay hold of him, for they said he has become frantic.”\(^6\) That the mother and brothers of Jesus are meant is proved clearly by verse 31: “And then his brothers and his mother came, and standing outside they sent in to him calling him.” Upon this Jesus says, “Who is my mother, or my brothers etc.,” closing: “For who does the will of God, he is my brother, my sister and my mother.” Jesus surely distinguishes here between his mother, brothers and sisters in the common sense and the spiritual relationship to him. Compare the parallel passages in Matt. xii. 46 etc. and Luke viii. 19 etc.

4. The Fourth Gospel, while taking the extremest liberty, in consequence of its speculative and idealizing tendency, with the historical facts of the life of Jesus, has nevertheless preserved the right view regarding the brothers of Jesus. In vii. 3 we are told that the brothers of Jesus urged Jesus to go up to Jerusalem to the feast of tabernacles in order that his disciples should see the works that he did, and then distinctly adds that *not even*\(^7\) his brothers believed in him. Compare this with Mark, where his brothers and mother try to persuade Jesus to stop his teaching: Evidently his nearest relatives, as in the case of many great reformers, were at first not in accord with his zeal and undertaking. That his brothers and not his followers are meant, is also evident from John ii. 11-12. In this passage a clear distinction is made between the *disciples*\(^8\) and the mother and brothers of Jesus. His disciples (verse 11) are said to have believed in him on account of the miracle at Cana. In verse 12 we then read: “After this he went to Capernaum, he and his mother and his brothers and his *disciples*.”

5. The very old apocryphal gospels, that to the Hebrews and that of the Ebionites, likewise retain the primitive tradition of the mother and brothers of Jesus. In the fragments of the former we read: “Behold, the mother of the Lord and his brothers said to him: John the Baptist baptizes for forgiveness of sins; let us go and be baptized by him.” In the fragments of the Ebionitic gospel we read:

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\(^5\) *oi par' autov* means only his blood relations according to Greek usage in Xen. Anab., VI, 6, 24. Cyrop. VI, 2, 1. Polyb. XXII, I, 6. I Macc. IX. 44.
\(^6\) ληστης.
\(^7\) *οὐδὲ γὰρ*, verse 5.
\(^8\) *μαθηταί*,
"It was told him: Behold, your mother and your brothers are standing outside. He said: Who are my mother and brothers? And he stretched out his hand over his disciples and said: These are my brothers and my mother and sisters, who do the commands of my father."

The evidence of these apocryphal gospels becomes the stronger when we remember that their readers, Jewish Christians, rejected the miraculous birth of Jesus and considered him the son of Joseph and Mary, assuming him to be the son of God only in consequence of his being filled with the Holy Spirit at the time of his baptism.

6. Eusebius in Hist. Eccl., III, 20, cites the following from the Palestinian Hegesippus, born of Jewish parents and member of the Jerusalemic church (died 180 A. D.). It does not matter whether the story of Hegesippus is strictly fact or not, but the story supports the tradition of the brothers of Jesus. I translate: "In those times there were yet some of the sons of Judas, a brother of the Lord according to the flesh, whom they had accused as being from the race of David. These Priobocatus brought before the Emperor Domitian, for he feared the coming of Christ just as Herod. And he asked them, whether they were from David, and they said so. Then he asked them, how much property and money they had. Then they both answered that they only had 9000 denaria, of which each had half. But that they did not have it in silver but only in the value of thirty-nine plethra of land, from which they paid tribute and lived by working it themselves. They thereupon showed their hands, their bodies bearing witness to their hard toil and their callous hands to continuous labor. Asked about Christ and his kingdom, of what kind it was and where and when it would appear, they answered that it was not a worldly or earthly one, but heavenly; that it would appear at the end of days, when Christ would come in glory to judge the living and dead and to give each according to his deserts."

All the foregoing seems to my unsophisticated mind to support the view that "the brothers of the Lord" in 1 Cor. ix. 5 and the "James, the brother of the Lord" in Gal. i. 19, on which Dr. Smith alone dwells in his article, were more than spiritual brothers of Jesus. Especially since Paul in both places distinctly distinguishes the brothers of the Lord and James from the other apostles and Kephas. Would there be any meaning in looking upon these brothers and James as being only in general followers of Jesus, there being so many of them besides the special twelve? Only the prominence which James shared as a pillar (Gal. ii. 9) besides John and Peter in the Jerusalemitic church, as did his other brothers as blood rela-
tions of Jesus, can account for this definite and clear distinction from the other apostles and Barnabas and Paul in 1 Cor. ix. 5-6. By the way it is not true, as Dr. Smith says, that "brother" or "brothers of the Lord" is New Testament phraseology. This is only the phraseology of Paul but not that of the Gospels, which speak of the brothers of Jesus. These "shreds" regarding the brothers of Jesus besides other shreds into which I will not enter here, are so convincing to me for the humanity of Jesus, that it will take a long time yet before I will give up my belief in the historical existence of Jesus although I have no personal interest in it whatever.

Still, my historical baggage may weigh too heavily on me yet, preventing me from venturing into the airy flights of pure idealism in this question. In my heavy historical mind I sometimes envy such men as Drews, who not only throw overboard John the Baptist, but even Kephas, with whom the brothers of Jesus are brought in connection. For Simon Peter is a purely mythical figure now, to whose existence Mithras, Proteus, Semo, Shem, Janus etc. have contributed. What will be next? Perhaps the evaporation of Paul himself. If John the Baptist, Peter, John, Paul, Barnabas are evaporated the question of the brothers of Jesus will be definitely settled, for there will be no longer any nucleus, about which these nebular elements can gather.