

came to the middle & started laying into each other. He tried to get hold of my feet but I stamped on his face & jumped up in the air & started to kick him as if I was tramping on the ground. But when I saw this was taking too long I joined my hands & locked my fingers together & grabbed hold of his head & he fell flat on his face & I squashed his head. And the people started cheering & my seconds burst into song. And I went up to the Trainer & got the branch. And He kissed me & said, 'Peace be with you, my child'. And to great applause I started to go out through the Victors' gate. And I woke up & realized it wasn't the beasts I'd be fighting but the Devil, but I also knew that Victory was near at hand for me.

This is what I've written up to the day before the Show. What happens at the actual Show someone else can write, if they want to.

(To be concluded)



GAMALIEL

(Questions should be addressed to Gamaliel, c/o the Editor, THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, Hawkesyard Priory, Rugeley, Staffs.)

Q. Is it open to a Catholic to hold that 'the brothers of Jesus' were sons of St Joseph by a former marriage?

E.C.H.

A. This opinion certainly has an ancient and respectable ancestry. It was held in the fourth century by St Epiphanius, St Hilary, and others; it was mentioned by St Augustine as a possible explanation of the phrase. But it was rejected with characteristic brusqueness by St Jerome as 'apocryphal raving', since its earliest occurrence is in the apocryphal gospel of James. He maintained that 'the brothers of Jesus' were his cousins.

Both suggestions were made with the same idea, namely of defending the perpetual virginity of our Lady, by showing that 'the brothers of Jesus' need not have been sons of hers. Quite apart from the dogmatic teaching of the Church, it does violence to the gospel narratives to suppose that they were. In the first place, it is unthinkable in the social context of that place and time that younger brothers should have behaved towards the first-

born of the family as 'the brothers of Jesus' behaved towards him (Mark iii, 21, 31; John vii, 3ff). Secondly if our Lord had younger brothers, he would scarcely have entrusted his mother to the beloved disciple when he was dying on the cross (John xix, 27).

When it comes to choosing between St Epiphanius and St Jerome, we would have to be a little more cautious than the latter in assuming that support for an opinion from an apocryphal gospel rules it out of court. This same apocryphal gospel of St James is the ultimate source for the stories of St Anne and St Joachim, who have been accepted by Catholic devotion with only St Bernard raising his voice in protest; and much more important, this apocryphal gospel gives us a detailed story to support belief in our Lady's bodily assumption into heaven. (As a matter of fact, this support from a not very respectable quarter delayed the doctrine's universal acceptance, and in the eighth or ninth century some sceptical monk wrote a letter purporting to come from the pen of St Jerome—ob. A.D. 420—dismissing the assumption as an apocryphal fairy story, just as the genuine Jerome dismissed the idea of a previous marriage of St Joseph.)

However, what evidence there is does make it rather less probable that 'the brothers of Jesus' were sons of St Joseph by a former marriage. Mark vi, 3, gives their names as 'James and Joses and Judas and Simon'—Matt. xiii, 55, 'James and Joseph and Simon and Judas'. The form 'Joses' for 'Joseph' in Mark's list is very unusual. It occurs twice more in the same gospel, xv, 40: 'and there were women watching [the crucifixion] from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and Joses'—Matt. xxvii, 56, 'Mary the mother of James and Joseph'—and xv, 47. James and Joseph were of course both very common names; but the use of the very *uncommon* form Joses in both cases in Mark, and the keeping of the same order, suggest quite strongly that these two whose mother was present at the crucifixion were 'the brothers of the Lord'. If their mother was still alive at the time of the crucifixion, not even the most hardened agnostic will ask us to believe that she was the wife of St Joseph—unless he would identify her with our Lady. But in that case, quite apart from the objections we have already seen to 'the brothers of Jesus' being our Lady's younger sons, we have to accept that the mother of Christ—and he after all is the subject of the gospels—is identified by Mark as 'the mother of James the

less and Joses' and by Matthew, in one place, simply as 'the other Mary' (xxviii, 1). This is taxing even the most willing credulity.

James and Joseph, then, if they are the sons of this other Mary, and also 'the brothers of the Lord', must be cousins of his in some way. It seems to me unlikely that their mother was our Lady's sister—two sisters of the same name would have led to endless domestic confusion; perhaps she was a cousin, or her husband may have been our Lady's brother. It is the purest conjecture.

As for Simon and Jude, Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History*, written in the first half of the fourth century, quotes Hegesippus, a chronicler of the second century, as saying that 'after the martyrdom of James the Just [the brother of the Lord], once more a son of his uncle, Simeon the son of Clopas, was constituted bishop [of Jerusalem]. All proposed him, as being another cousin of the Lord's' (*Ecc. Hist.* IV, 22). The Greek word used for 'uncle' means 'paternal uncle'; so Clopas (cf. John xix, 25, perhaps also Luke xxiv, 18) would be St Joseph's brother. Whether Jude was a brother of Simon-Simeon we cannot say.

The historical probabilities then are against 'the brothers of Jesus' being sons of St Joseph by a former marriage. Theological arguments have also been propounded against the idea of St Joseph having contracted a former marriage, but I must confess they do not strike me as being particularly compelling.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Religious Poverty

DEAR EDITOR,

The life of the Little Brothers of Jesus involves living conditions modelled on those of the very poorest, adapts itself to the current social conditions, seeks identification with the condition and work of the poor in the world, relies for its material sustenance on the earning of wages.

The object of Fr Carpentier's criticism, in his lecture printed in your February number, is not, I understand, this particular congregation but certain views current in France at the time of his address. However, for the sake of those who, like myself, may at first have mistaken the sense of this criticism, I should like to