

**THE PRIVATE
RELATIONSHIPS
OF CHRIST**

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The private relationships of Christ by T. Vincent Tymms

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T. VINCENT TYMMS

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OF CHRIST**

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BY

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER.	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY	7
I. THE ORACLE OF SIMION	12
II. IN CHILDHOOD	36
III. IN YOUTH	55
IV. IN EARLY MANHOOD	73
V. LEAVING HOME	89
VI. SEPARATED FROM HIS BRETHREN	109
VII. THE BREACH WIDENED	129
VIII. REJECTED BY HIS BRETHREN	144
IX. MARY AT THE CROSS	164
X. HIS REAPPEARANCE TO JAMES	181
XI. AT PENTECOST	201
XII. AFTER PENTECOST	224

THE PRIVATE RELATIONSHIPS OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTORY

By humbling Himself to wear the likeness of men the Son of God became a Brother to the whole race of mankind, but, at the same time, He entered into special family relations. By His birth of Mary, He became not only a Son of man, but a member of the family of Abraham, a scion of the royal house of David, and a near kinsman of all Mary's kindred. The Gospels say little of the feelings with which He was regarded by these relatives, and disclose but a few incidents of His intercourse with them. But some facts are recorded which are highly significant and worthy of far more attention than has usually been bestowed upon them by the Christian Church.

History shows that the influence of public

The Private Relationships of Christ

men has always been powerfully affected by their private relationships, and by the popular belief that public actions are secretly motivated by personal affections or antipathies. The worship of the Virgin Mary as the mother of God, which was slowly developed in the Latin Church, vividly illustrates the working of this law in the case of the King of kings. It shows how a false thought of the influence exerted by one of our Lord's earthly relatives may eclipse the eternal throne and transfer to a human object the adoration and love of which none but a Divine Being can be worthy. The fact that such a mistake has induced millions to put more trust in the womanly sympathies of Mary than in the love of Him who lived and died to win our hearts, should convince us, if we need convincing, that the private relationships of Christ deserve the closest study, and must not be regarded as merely interesting, or subordinate, or accidental details of His life. Their religious value is inestimable, and in pondering them we shall not fail to gather some instruction as to the manner of His everlasting kingdom. At the same time we may learn some lessons which will help to sanctify the home life of our own families, and

Introductory

to hallow all the bonds of natural affection. Best of all, perhaps, the servants of Christ, who sometimes find it difficult to reconcile the claims of earthly kinsmanship with those which are made upon them as citizens of the kingdom of heaven, may find some help by looking upon Him who, in this regard, as in all else, has left us an example that we should follow in His steps.

It does not fall within the scope of my design to speak of any incidents prior to the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, nor shall I sacrifice my purely practical object by discussing the numerous questions, critical and theological, which arise in connection with the nativity itself. It is the preacher's wisdom and duty to say, "I believe, and therefore preach," and as long as he does not say "I know" instead of "I believe," those who disagree with him have no just cause of complaint, however warmly he may commend his convictions to his hearers or readers. The basal convictions on which the following discourses are founded are outlined by a master hand in the statement, that "God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that He might redeem them that were under the law,

The Private Relationships of Christ

that we might receive the adoption of sons." Within the vast range of thought these brief lines enclose there is room for all that is told by Matthew and Luke about the manner of our Lord's incoming, and for the underlying mystery of Incarnation as unveiled by John. John, writing in extreme old age, and looking as from a great altitude on the life which he had seen and touched in closest intimacy, saw it in its entirety as an earthly life spent under the conditions of space and time, but he saw it also as an episode in an Eternal Life. The human and domestic side of the tale had long been told, and losing sight of details, he declares that the Word, the Self-expression of God, became flesh and dwelt among us, that He might reveal the Divine glory in a fashion which men of flesh and blood might understand. Matthew narrates the story of Christ's birth with many details which none but Joseph could supply; telling of the agony which came to him, and how, with aid from heaven, he rose to the height of a faith which, under ordinary circumstances, would be folly; so that taking Mary to himself, he in due time became a foster-father to her child, although it was not his own. Luke tells the same tale, with incidents

Introductory

and disclosures of thought and feeling which only Mary could furnish. From their nature these stories admit of no corroboration from human witnesses, and they must for ever be incredible to those who do not on other grounds believe in Jesus as the Son of God. The Life of superhuman glory is the sole verification of a supernatural birth, and it is alike irrational and dangerous to invert this order of faith. When the light of the knowledge of the glory of God has shined in our hearts from the face of Jesus Christ, it excites no surprise to hear John describe Him as "the only-begotten of the Father," and when we inquire what this great word can mean, there is no answer so simple, and to my mind so credible, so self-evidently true, as the artless story of the nativity preserved by Matthew and Luke. The birth of Jesus was the commencement of a new cycle of spiritual evolution, the starting point of a new creation, and it is not strange that the New Man who surpasses the very hopes and ideals of His fellows, should be as unique in His origin as He confessedly is in His character, and in His achievements as the Regenerator of His race.