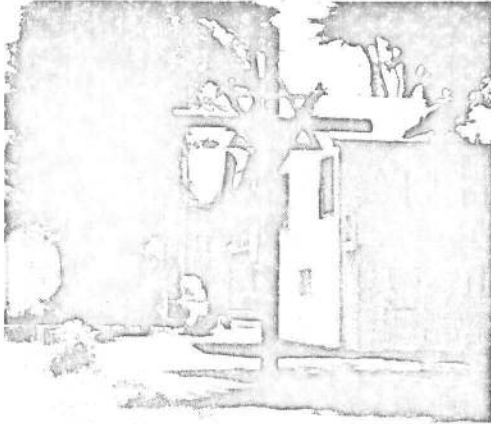


JESUS WAS NOT A JEW

by W.G. Finlay D.D.



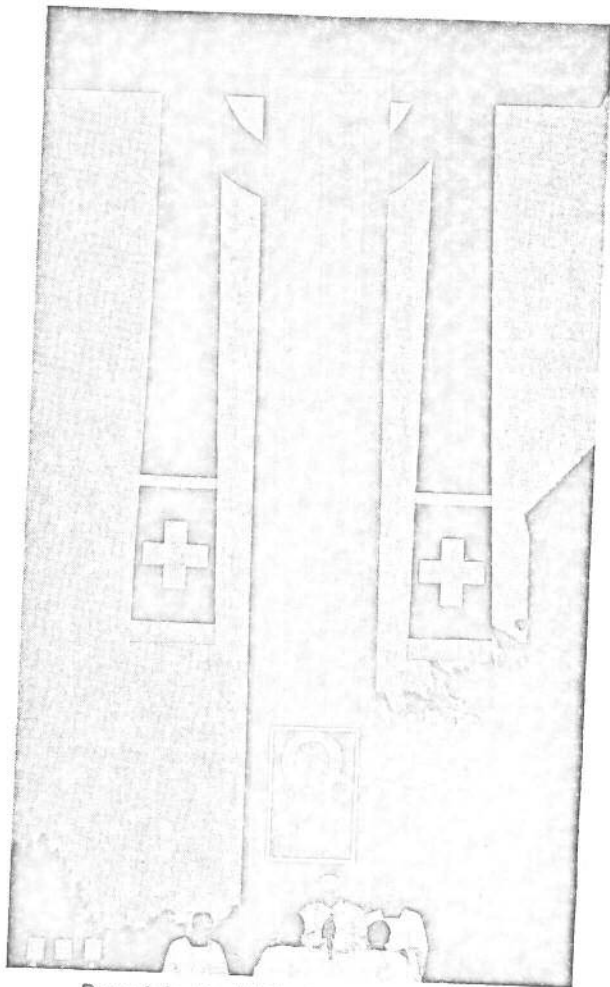
The Magen Dawid superimposed over the Cross outside a church in the United States - error in both symbols.

"Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"

(Matt. 16:13-16).

The controversy concerning the identity of the Lord Jesus Christ has raged down the centuries and today, nineteen hundred years after His Birth, the subject remains the area of more than a little confusion. In Protestant evangelical circles He is held to be a Jew, in Roman Catholic thinking He appears to be an enigma which, if the accompanying photograph of the Pope's celebration of pontifical Mass in Warsaw's Victory Square is anything to go on, would suggest that both Madonna and Child were of the Black or Coloured race. In the leftist political arena of Christianity as exemplified by the World Council of Churches He is held as Universal Man – totally raceless and wholly committed to the ideal of the brotherhood of man. In Jewish circles, He is still said to be an impostor and concerning His Birth, the Jewish Encyclopaedia (1904 Ed, Vol 7, page 170) comments on the prevailing thought that He was the illegitimate son of Panthera, a Roman soldier.

Over recent years a new trend has developed which has given substance to the question asked by the Lord Jesus Christ and as posed in the quotation which prefaces this article – "Whom say ye that I am?" In those days and despite the religious fanaticism of the Pharisees, men were still entitled to their own views, but today it would appear that unless one conforms with prescribed identity norms, State machinery is invoked which curtails the publishing of views other than those prescribed. In South Africa, the July edition of the *S.A. Observer* was banned and among the reasons given for this banning was that the Editor contended that Jesus was not a Jew. It should be stated that this was only one of several reasons, but it surely calls into question the Christian liberty in a professed Christian country.



Pope John Paul 11 celebrates pontifical Mass under a giant Cross in Warsaw's Victory Square note the identity of Mother and Child !

Who Was Jesus of Nazareth?

Unless one is prepared to discount the Gospel accounts, one must provide the unequivocal answer to this question with the confession – The Christ, the Son of the living God – just as Peter did. It would not be a digression to continue with Matthew's account of the Lord's reaction to this confession, for as with His Identity, much confusion has arisen because of theological interpretation of His response. He said: "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:17-18). There

is obviously something amiss here for in one breath the Lord calls him 'Simon Bar-jonah' and in the next, 'Peter'. In John 1:42, i.e. when Simon Bar-jonah was called to follow the Lord, Jesus had nicknamed him 'Cephas' or more correctly 'Petros' which of course, means a stone. In Isaiah 51:1, Abraham is referred to as a 'rock' from whence the Israel family was hewn and Peter, because he was a chip of that 'rock' was re-named as 'Petros' a stone chipped from that rock. Thus, in the Lord's reaction, one is directed to the national family of the Old Testament – the family whose commitment was totally to the accomplishment of God's oath-bound Covenant in the earth.

Here was one of the Covenant family which acknowledged that He, Jesus, was THE Anointed One as God the Father had promised through His servants the prophets Who would Redeem Israel, make an end of sin and bring in everlasting righteousness (Dan. 9:24). It was on this confession that the Lord stated that He would 'build' or 'confirm' (Greek: *oikodomeo*) His 'church'. It is of course, a matter of history that theologians prefer the word 'church' to the Greek word *ecclesia* for while the Greek word means 'a called out assembly' which in the days when it was used was an exclusive term precluding slaves and aliens, the Greek *kuriakos* (belonging to the Lord) is preferred because it suits the doctrines of men. If the Lord Jesus Christ intended to build or inaugurate a 'church' on Peter's confession, why did He not use the Greek word *kuriakos* which was the etymon of the modern English word 'church' – why did He use the word *ecclesia*, a word understood by the disciples as having an exclusively national sense?

The Family Line

While the Lord told Peter that 'flesh and blood' had not revealed it to him, but His Father in heaven, the written Scriptures today provide their testimony and one is able to see the Identity of the Lord as neither Jew, nor Coloured nor Universal man. There are of course, two accounts which purport to be the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ, but as these are examined, it becomes obvious that they are not the same and, in point of fact, deal with two branches of the same family i.e. two sons of David, Solomon and Nathan.

The first account is recorded by Matthew who shows the descent of Joseph who became Mary's husband after the Birth of the Lord, from David via Solomon by Bath-sheba (2nd Sam. 12:24). As the Advent of the Lord was characterised by the Virgin Birth one wonders why this genealogy of Joseph

was included and why it was begun with the preface: "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David . . . etc." One can only surmise that Matthew, who was in all probability a Levite (Mark 2:14), was very conscious of the legal implications as they dominated the thinking of the true Israelites who had been converted to Pharisaism (Matt. 23:15) and he therefore included the genealogy of Joseph although making it very clear that he, Joseph, did not 'beget' Jesus Who was called Christ. Having overcome the legal hurdle, Matthew then proceeds to elaborate on the Virgin Birth and draws attention to the prophecy of Isaiah which was made in the national context of Israel. He relates that Joseph was about to end his engagement to Mary because she was with child when the angel of the Lord appeared to him and told him of the circumstances of the conception. "And she shall bring forth a son and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:21-23).

The information which the angel of the Lord imparted to Joseph was no sudden and startling revelation of a new development which was to take place – it was a reiteration of that which the prophets of Israel had written. Joseph, being a pure Israelite (the genealogy proves the point) and unimpeded by Pharisaic delusions could understand and accept immediately the fulfilment of Israelitish prophecies made some five and seven centuries earlier. He could recognise the Isaiah prophecy concerning the sign of the Virgin Birth (Isa. 7:14) and he could accept the statement: "He shall save his people from their sins" as this had been stated by both Isaiah (Isa. 53:12) and Daniel (Dan. 9:24). Matthew's account therefore, apart from overcoming the legal hurdle, presented the Advent in a national context which is precisely what the Lord Himself insisted (Matt. 15:24) and what He stated to Peter (Matt. 16:18).

The second genealogy of the Lord is presented in Luke 3:23-38 and is indeed the line of Mary, the human vehicle through which the Word was made flesh (John 1:14). It is absolutely true that Joseph is mentioned as the male head of the line (Luke 3:23) but unlike the natural generation found in Matthew's statement: "Matthan begat Jacob and Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, etc.", no such natural generation is found. In the Authorised Version it is stated that he was the 'son of Heli' and notwith-

standing the fact that the word 'son' does not appear in the Greek text and is characterised as such by italics in the Authorised Version, the relationship is derived from his marriage to Mary – he became the son-in-law to Heli.

The account in Luke's Gospel does more than merely identify the Davidic ancestry of Mary – it amplifies the quotation made by the angel of the Lord to Joseph when he said that He, Jesus, would 'save his people from their sins' (Matt. 1:21). If one has access to the Greek text of Luke's account, it will be noted that the translators have inserted the words 'the son' before each name in the genealogy which are certainly not in the original text. Conversely, they omitted the definite article which in the text, precedes each proper name and although this may have made the English translation grammatically correct, it has certainly clouded the issue concerning the identity of 'His people'. If Mary's genealogy is followed through from Heli, it will be noted that it passes through the Davidic house, through Abraham, through Shem, through Noah and back to Enos, the son of Seth who was the son of THE Adam. If the Authorised Version is reconsidered it will be noted that verse 38 of Luke 3 reads: "Which was the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God". The Greek text reads: "Which was of the Enos, which was of the Seth, which was of the Adam, which was of the God". That Truth has been sacrificed for grammatical correction cannot be doubted here for in eliminating the definite article which precedes the word Adam, confusion arises as to which Adam is referred to – that in Genesis 1:26 or Genesis 2:7?

There is absolutely no evidence to suggest that the Adam of Genesis 1:26 (simply translated as 'man' in the Authorised Version) was given any law whereas the Adam (again simply translated as 'the man') in Genesis 2:7 was certainly given the Law as was symbolised in the 'tree of knowledge of good and evil'. Having transgressed the Law of God – an act which gave rise to the expression 'sin' (1st John 3:4) – it became necessary that propitiation be made for this hence the angel's statement: "He shall save his people from their sins". The family line is thus clear and unmistakable and cannot be equated with the contention of Universal Man.

He Shall Be Called a Nazarene

In Matthew 2:23 which deals with the sequel to the death of Herod who had ordered the massacre of all children under the age of two years, it will be noted that Joseph, having sought safety in Egypt,

Plan's lineage
of genealogy

now decided to return home. "And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene." While this statement positively dissociates Jesus of Nazareth from the Jews, it creates a problem which can only be solved by considering the Hebrew and Greek texts once again. The fallacy of the statement 'Jesus the Jew' will become obvious as the subject of 'Nazareth' is explored and the first step in this direction is the consideration of the word 'Nazareth' itself.

The first point which strikes one is that nowhere in the Old Testament does this name appear which immediately brings into question the authenticity of the statement: "He shall be called a Nazarene". If no such place existed in the Old Testament, how could the prophets write about it? The Hebrew root which developed into the name 'Nazareth' was *netzer* which literally means 'a branch' and this word is found in the Old Testament and is associated with the situation arising out of Israel's transgression of God's Holy Law. It will be recalled that through Solomon's transgression of the Law, the twelve tribed Israel kingdom was divided into two sections (1st Kings 12:16-20). The majority northern kingdom became subject to successive waves of Assyrian invasions until finally, in 721 B.C. its capital, Samaria, was finally taken. If one follows the history of these invasions and notes the degree of impact that these made, it will be noted that while the territory of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali – in the region of the Sea of Galilee – were afflicted, there is absolutely nothing to suggest that all the people of these tribes were taken into captivity as were the Ephraimites of Samaria. Isaiah, who wrote during the period when the Assyrian invasions were taking place, wrote of God's intention to bring the northern kingdom to an end but in the process, some would be left in the land in the northern regions and away from the centre of activity as it were. "And in that day it shall come to pass, that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean (it should be noted that nothing is said of making it disappear altogether). And it shall be as when the harvestman gathereth his corn, and reapeth the ears with his arm; and it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim. Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the Lord God of Israel" (Isa. 17:4-6). These 'fruitful branches' are written of as *pârâh netzer* – the word *pârâh* being dropped and the people and land simply

being known as *netzer* which eventually developed into Nazareth.

One may therefore see in the name Nazareth an association with those in Israel who were not taken into the Assyrian captivity and who remained in their land despite the changes which were taking place in the territory of their brethren in the south. While the word *netzer* applied to those Israelites who were the 'branches' of the uppermost bough of Jacob, Isaiah made reference to another *netzer*: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isa. 11:1). The association of this 'Branch' which came from the stem of Jesse and those 'branches' of Jacob which had been left in the land was unmistakable for in John 1:11 it is stated that "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" while in Matthew 13:54, 'His own' is qualified as the people of Nazareth. "And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue . . . And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house." In this, one may see that He was indeed a Nazarene – in the first instance THE Branch among the branches of Jacob and secondly a Nazarene because He lived and taught there except when it was necessary for Him to visit the Judaeac capital of Jerusalem.

Judaea and Its Inhabitants

Having seen that Nazareth in Galilee was peopled by the descendants of those true Israelites who had escaped the deportation by the Assyrians, attention is now focussed on the minority section of the twelve tribes – the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The Babylonians who succeeded the Assyrians as the then world power, devastated the land occupied by the two remaining tribes and took them into captivity where they languished for the seventy year duration of the Empire's existence. During this time, nomadic people took possession of the land (Ezek. 33:24) and there is no means whereby they can be identified except to note that they were not of the family of Abraham for they stated: "Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for an inheritance".

When, under the decree of Cyrus, the Medo-Persian king, a remnant of the Babylonian captivity returned to rebuild Jerusalem (Ezra 1:2), certain 'adversaries' were drawn to the work which again suggests that another un-named element was present in the land. When the work of reconstruction was completed, it was evident that the remnant of the

tribes of Judah and Benjamin which had returned from Babylon were a minority population group for Ezra recounts that the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians and the Amorites were in the land (Ezra 9:1). If one considers how relatively small the territory was and the wide diversity of people who subsequently took up residence there, one can appreciate something of the story of the land which came to be known as Judaea. It is not known who coined the name Judaea, but it is known that the territory so named comprised an area some fifty-five miles from north to south and from twenty-five to thirty miles in width. It has been suggested that the name was derived from Judah which could have been the case, but to call the whole population by the name of a small portion of a remnant of the tribe of Judah which returned would have been as ludicrous as suggesting that South Africans are part and parcel of the general term 'African'. The name Judaea was a territorial and not a racial or tribal one and when it is considered that the modern English word 'Jew' is derived from the historical Judaea it will be seen that a geographical and not a racial term has been perpetuated.

The northern boundary of Judaea certainly did not take in Galilee, nor did it cover the people living there – the difference being so great that even the dialect spoken in the north differed from the Judaeans (Matt. 26:69-73). It was from the Galileans that the Lord Jesus Christ selected His disciples and on the occasion of calling Nathanael, it will be noted how far the Pharisaic propaganda had penetrated. It will be recalled that the Hebrew *netzer* which covered the true Israelites who had been left in the land and who had never been associated with the population of Judaea finally developed into Nazareth – facts which were certainly known to the hierarchy which now controlled Judaea. In typical vein they coined an expression based on the identity of the people which was contrasted with their own heterogeneous origins – 'Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth' (John 1:46). Here, without a shadow of a doubt is the work of the anti-God conspiracy which in David's time had raised its head and had proclaimed its mission as the demise of Israel (Psalm 83:1-4). The remnant of true Israel – the uppermost branches – were in Nazareth while the cosmopolitan Judaeans were claiming to be God's chosen people – it is small wonder that they, the counterfeit, engendered a complex within the Nazarenes – Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?

The Inscription On The Cross

Notwithstanding the scriptural facts as presented above, there are still those who insist on using the Inscription on the Cross – 'Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews' – as the basis for their identification of Him with the Jews. Despite the fact that He had categorically stated that they, the Jews, were 'not of God' (John 8:47) and that they were 'not my sheep' (John 10:26) – despite this there are still those who persist in identifying Him as a Jew. The subject too of the Inscription on the Cross is a very poor basis for identification for apart from it being an English translation and incorrectly translated at that, it might surprise many people to realise that the Inscription was changed *three times* during the period of the Crucifixion. All that is necessary to confirm something surrounding the confusion created by the Inscription is to study the Gospel accounts again and note the series of events as they are related in the four Gospels.

As must be obvious, the Inscription is a title and as Mark's account is merely the conventional accusation which accompanied the convicted to his punishment, this account can be left out of the story. In John 19:19 it will be noted that Pilate 'wrote a title' which was written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin and being a Roman, the Latin would rightly express the title which Pilate intended to convey. In Latin this title read: "Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum" and an accurate English translation of this is: 'Jesus the Nazarene Ruler of the Judaeans' which, far from making Him a Judaeans, establishes Him as a Nazarene which is obviously not a Judaeans. There is of course, no modern English development for the word Nazarene as there has been for the word Judaeans but had there been, the gulf between the Lord Jesus Christ and the Jews would have been emphasised more than it is in the original languages.

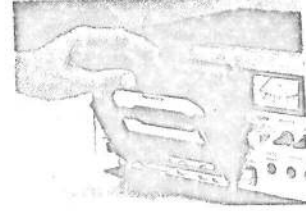
Be that as it may, the next point to note is the argument which developed between the chief priests and Pilate concerning what had been written – this argument being recorded in verses 21 and 22 of John 19. If this account is read, it will be seen that the original writing and the argument took place *before* the parting of the Lord's garments (John 19:23) and although John does not record the outcome of the controversy, Matthew picks up the story and relates they set up his title *after* they had parted His garments – a title which had removed the reference to His Identity as a Nazarene. There is no evidence in Matthew's account to suggest that this title which was set up after they had parted the Lord's garments was in the three languages which

the original had been written in before it left Pilate's presence as he makes no mention of languages – only the title. One wonders if the chief priests had second thoughts about deliberately changing what Pilate had written and it is quite conceivable that they believed he would send someone to investigate the Inscription. If the Inscription contained only one language as is suggested by Matthew's account, there could be repercussions from Pilate and so a third Inscription appeared and it will be noted that this took place 'at about the sixth hour' when darkness began to fall and this Inscription was written in Greek, Latin and Hebrew – a reversal of the order of languages as it had been originally written by Pilate. In the dark, three languages could be seen and any investigator would not take the trouble to note that the order had been reversed. He would not see too that the Nazarene Identity of Jesus had been removed.

The duplicity of the chief priests in the matter of the Inscription placed over the Lord is reflected by those today who take whatever account happens to suit them in their insistence that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed a Jew. They fail too to appreciate that in the English translations they are dealing with the interpretations of men – interpretations which have been coloured by the traditions of men. The irony of the modern situation is that if Christ came today as He came at the First Advent, He would be hounded as a 'racist' – 'I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Matt. 15:24) – He would be castigated as 'antisemitic' – 'Ye (the Jews) are of your father the devil' (John 8:44) and He would be accused of violating 'human rights' by limiting His disciples' activity to one people alone (Matt. 10:6).

It is indeed small wonder that in the preview of His Second Advent, the Lord Jesus Christ related that His Identity would be an enigma for His Name – the Word of God – would be unknown among men. Today, while men seek to mould Him in conformity with their own ideas – to make Him a Jew, a Black, a Coloured or simply Universal Man – He awaits the time when He will take the Throne of His father David (Luke 1:32) when He shall rule over the house of Jacob (Luke 1:33) and when His influence shall spread among His people and His Government shall bring order into a totally disorganised world. It is at this time that the deluded world will be startled by the Identity of this 'man of Nazareth' – the Son of the Living God.

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