Chronology of Jesus' and John the Baptist' Births, and Jesus' Epiphany and Death in Maria Valtorta's Writings

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Abstract

The literary work of the mystical writer Maria Valtorta (1897-1961) contains a detailed life of Jesus, without any explicit dates with respect to the Julian calendar. She sets Jesus' birth (Nativity) on the first day of the Hebrews' feast of Hannukah, and his age, when he was crucified, in 1737 weeks. She writes that the Passover of the year before his death fell on Saturday. All these unusual chronological data concerning Jesus' life raise the question about their coherence and self-consistency. Astronomical and calendar analysis allows setting: 1) Jesus' crucifixion on 23 April 34; 2) the Nativity, Epiphany and Jesus' Baptism on January 6; 3) John the Baptist's birthday on June 24. All these results arise the question about the origin of this hidden chronology which, unexpectedly for a mystic of Western Christian tradition, confirms the Eastern tradition about the most important dates of Jesus' life.

Keywords

Jesus of Nazareth, Nativity Day, Hanukkah, Epiphany, Jesus' Baptism, John the Baptist, Herod the Great, Last Supper, Crucifixion, Maria Valtorta

1. Controversial Dates of Jesus' Birth and Death

For the Gregorian calendar time coordinates are determined by the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. Despite the large literature, neither the date of birth (Christmas, Nativity Day) nor the date of crucifixion has been determined unambiguously. In this introductory section, we first summarize the research and discussion on these controversial dates and, secondly, we propose a new research track, based

not on historical sources but on the large literary Corpus written by Maria Valtorta (Matricciani, 2022a), an Italian mystic of the 20th century, from which we have already extracted many coherent data on Jesus' life and Palestine of 2000 years ago. Indeed, beyond her knowledge, culture and awareness, her narration of the Gospels has a built-in precise chronology of Jesus' life. The extraction of this historical information, hidden in her mystical writings and the analysis of its chronological coherence is our new approach to studying the so-called *private revelations* of mystics about Jesus' life, arising, however, new open questions. For theologians, why Maria Valtorta's writings contain this precise and hidden chronology? For historians, are the many details she reports on Jesus' life useful in studying the historical Jesus?

1.1. The Debate on Dating Jesus' Birth and Death

Both dictionaries (Green at al., 2013) and monographies (Firpo, 1983; Nothaf, 2012a; Brown, 1999), dedicated to these studies, usually offer to the reader many pages of bibliography. Nevertheless, today Nativity is usually set in a large range of time, from 6 BC (Before Christ) to 1 AC (After Christ), with the lower year connected to the death of Herod the Great, mentioned by Josephus and set by most historians in the year 4 BC. According to Josephus, Herod the Great died after a lunar eclipse and before Passover. Since the 19th century (Schürer, 1891) most scholars assume the eclipse occurred on 13 March 4 BC, so that Dionysius Exiguus was wrong in calculating the beginning of the Christian era, by four years, at least, because Herod the Great must have been alive when Jesus was born.

Consequently, the Nativity, set at least four years before the beginning of the Christian Era, has influenced most scholars who have preferred setting the crucifixion on 7 April 30, among the dates astronomically allowed (La Greca & De Caro, 2017; Finegan, 1998; Fotheringham, 1934; Nothaf, 2012a; Schaefer, 1990; Bond, 2013; Humphreys & Waddington, 1983; Humphreys & Waddington, 1992; Ruggles, 1990). This dating aims at recovering compatibility with historical and chronological constraints deduced by the Gospels, such as Jesus' age of about thirty years when his public ministry began (Luke, 3, 23) and three years of public ministry deducible by John's Gospel, leading to an age of about 33 years at death.

Herod the Great's death set on 4 BC (Schürer, 1891) has influenced scholars both in considering wrong Dionysius Exiguus' calculation and in determining the year of Jesus' death. But a recent study (De Caro et al., 2021a) has shown that naked-eye visibility of partial eclipses rules out the eclipse of 4 BC because, very likely, it was not recognized as such by occasional observers, but likely confused with an almost-full moon. Instead, the analysis of other lunar eclipses visible from Jerusalem, indicates that Herod the Great died just after the beginning of the Christian Era, after the partial lunar eclipse occurred in the night 8-9 November 2 AC (La Greca & De Caro, 2019; Fedalto, 2012), effectively visible with naked eyes (De Caro et al., 2021a). This astronomical result confirms that Dio-

nysius Exiguus was right in setting the beginning of Christian Era at the end of 1 BC. Moreover, this result casts serious doubts on setting the crucifixion date on 7 April 30 AC, therefore arising the need for finding other solutions astronomically allowed.

To date the crucifixion, scholars start from knowing that it happened when Pontius Pilate ruled Judea (Tacitus, Ann. XV. 44; Josephus, AJ XVIII. 35; 55-64; 85-89; 177), i.e., from 26 to 36 AC (Wright et al., 2002; Nothaf, 2012a). The four canonical Gospels agree in reporting that Jesus died in a Friday afternoon. For Matthew (Mt), Mark (Mk) and Luke (Lk) (synoptic Gospels) that Friday was Nisan 15, the day of Passover. But for John (Jn), that Friday was not the day of Passover, because he mentions details referring to Nisan 14 (Jn 18, 28; 19, 31). Passover lambs were immolated from early afternoon of Nisan 14 (Josephus, BJ VI. 423), and Passover supper started only just after the sunset, already next day according to Jewish tradition. Therefore, for John the Last Supper was an evening supper started at the beginning of Nisan 14, not after the end, when Nisan 15 begins. It seems that the Gospels, on this central fact in Jesus' life, disagree. But, as we will discuss in the next section, by suitably choosing the crucifixion date (La Greca & De Caro, 2020), within those astronomically allowed, the incoherence can be solved.

Even ancient traditions on Nativity Day are controversial because they differ in the West (set on December 25) and in the East (set on January 6). In the Eastern tradition, January 6 is considered also the day of Epiphany and Jesus' baptism (Nothaf, 2012b). These dates are attested in some ancient sources and have produced many studies (Finegan, 1998: pp. 269-368; Beyer, 1998; Nothaf, 2012b). However, many scholars are skeptical about the historical value of these ancient traditions (Roll, 1995; Duchesne, 1889; Engberding, 1952; Talley, 1991).

In any case, the Eastern tradition is older than the Western one. Indeed, Clement of Alexandria (ca. 160-ca. 220) writes that the Gnostic Christian Basilideans considered the feast of Jesus' baptism (Mt 3, 1-17; Mk 1, 2-11; Lk 3, 1-18.21-22; Jn 1: 19-34) on January 6, and this date also became the date of Jesus's birth in the Eastern Mediterranean area. Moreover, it is possible to deduce this date from the ancient Eastern liturgy of Christmas, attested in Jerusalem, from the writings of Egeria (Silvia of Bordeaux), a pilgrim to the Holy Land in the year 385 (Geyer, 1898; Giannarelli, 2000). According to this tradition, Jesus was baptized precisely on his birthday, January 6 not December 25. According to (Förster, 2007) the roots of Christmas found in the IV century Holy Land can be considered a "historicizing" tendency to celebrate the main Christological feasts at the correct place and at the appropriate time, through pilgrimages. As Nativity celebrations in Jerusalem and in Bethlehem took place on January 6 until the VI century, Förster assumes that this was the original "Christmas" date, exported to Rome and there changed to December 25 under the influence of the pagan feast of Sol Invictus.

As a confirmation of Förster's work, in a recent study (De Caro et al., 2022) the Nativity Day dates of Western—December 25 and Eastern traditions—January 6

have been compared with Kislev 25, the initial day of the Jewish feast Hanukkah, reported in an ancient Syrian source (Constitutiones Apostolorum, V, 13, 1-2) of the IV century as the Nativity Day (Metzger, 1986). This day was the first day of the Feast of Temple Dedication, called the Feast of lights by Josephus (I century AC, JA XII,7), and known as Encenie in Greek, Hanukkah in Hebrew, a feast introduced in the II century BC. The same source sets the Epiphany on Tevet 6. Astronomical calculations have allowed to reconstruct moon phases and ancient luni-solar calendars, and to verify whether Hanukkah can be associated to the Nativity Day of the Christian tradition (De Caro et al., 2022). Indeed, by considering the leap years wrongly introduced in the first decades of the Julian calendar use, and the flexibility of the Jewish luni-solar calendar of 2000 years ago, regarding the beginning of months and embolismic years, astronomical calculations have shown that the Nativity Day set on Kislev 25 is compatible, within a maximum shift of only one day, with the Eastern tradition, January 6, if the year is 1 AC, thus in agreement with Dionysius Exiguus. Moreover, also the Epiphany is compatible with the Eastern tradition of January 6, if it is set on Tevet 6 of a year later, i.e., just in the luni-solar day indicated by the Constitutiones Apostolorum (De Caro et al., 2022). This can occur if the year of Jesus' birth is 1 AC, in agreement with the calculations done by Dionysius Exiguus, which set Jesus' birth on December 25 of 1 BC, only two weeks earlier. Indeed, if the Nativity Day is set on 6 January 1 AC, then the Epiphany on Tevet 6, set exactly 1 year later, falls on 6 January 2 AC.

This unexpected double coincidence allows to conclude that the Eastern tradition of setting the Nativity Day and the Epiphany on January 6 could be historically grounded (De Caro et al., 2022). Indeed, it is possible that the chronological source of the Constitutiones Apostolorum was mistakenly converted in the West, in the Julian calendar, as December 25, because people no longer used and knew the luni-solar calendar, and Kislev is the first winter month of the year, thus feeding the Western tradition of December 25. Therefore, the doubts of many scholars about the actual historicity of the most ancient traditions about the Nativity may be justified only for the Western tradition.

1.2. A New Research Track Based on Mystical Visions

In parallel to the study of the scarce ancient sources available, for unravelling the complicated situation regarding the historical Jesus, very recently a new research track, although not strictly historical but scientifically based and assessed, seems to be available and studied with objective tools.

The history of Christianity has always been characterized by mystics, persons who claim having direct talks with Jesus and visions of his life, which they describe in literary works. In principle, any scientific assessment of the details contained in these writings would seem impossible but in some recent works (Matricciani & De Caro, 2017; Matricciani & De Caro, 2018; Matricciani & De Caro, 2020; De Caro et al., 2020; De Caro et al., 2021b; Matricciani, 2022b) a series of scientific studies on the large literary Corpus written by Maria Valtorta,

an Italian mystic of the XX century, have shown that many coherent data on Jesus' life and Palestine of 2000 years ago can be unexpectedly extracted and verified from her literary work. Her writings contain a large amount of historical, biblical, geographical, archaeological, astronomical and meteorological information, hardly attributable to her skills, not to mention her very poor health conditions, because Maria Valtorta received an education not sufficient to justify what emerges from her writings.

In (Matricciani & De Caro, 2017) we have shown that Maria Valtorta, in her narration of Jesus' life (Valtorta, 2001), has also recorded the occurrence of rain and that the number of rainy days reported agrees with the current meteorological data, supposing random observations. Strikingly, and unexpectedly, both annual and monthly averages of rainy days agree with those calculated from the data of the Israel Meteorological Service.

In (Matricciani & De Caro, 2018) we assessed mathematical similarities and differences in her writings because she claims most of them are due to mystical visions. We have used mathematical and statistical tools developed for specifically studying deep linguistic aspects of texts (Matricciani, 2019). The general trend indicates that the texts explicitly attributable to Maria Valtorta, e.g., her Autobiography (Valtorta, 1997), differ significantly from the texts attributable, as she claims, to the alleged characters of Jesus and Mary, or to her Guardian angel. Mathematically, they seem to have been written by different authors. The comparison with the Italian literature is very striking. A single author, namely Maria Valtorta, seems to be able to write texts so diverse as to cover the entire mathematical range, suitably defined, of the Italian literature spanning seven centuries.

In (Matricciani & De Caro, 2018) we have studied Jesus Christ's speeches contained in *The Gospel as Revealed to Me* (Valtorta, 2001), Maria Valtorta's main literary work. By converting sequences of words into intervals, through a suitable reading/speaking speed, their duration was found to be realistic. Moreover, she can develop the literary character Jesus in such a way that he talks to specific audiences differently (Matricciani, 2022b).

Maria Valtorta also describes apostle Peter's first burial site, which, she writes, was not on the Vatican Hill. In (De Caro et al., 2020) the analysis of these texts, checked against the archeology of Rome of the I century and its catacombs, has allowed us to locate Peter's alleged first burial site in a hypogeum discovered in 1864 but not yet fully explored, near the beginning of Via Nomentana, in Rome. The probability that Maria Valtorta, by chance, invented the data that lead just to this site, is very small and reinforces the conclusion that casualness is very doubtful.

Maria Valtorta also describes Peter's last burial site which, she writes, was in the catacombs of SS Marcellino and Pietro, in Via Casilina, in a suburb of Rome known as Tor Pignattara (De Caro et al., 2021b). Besides some striking archeological finds on Peter's memory, already found near a particular cubicle in these catacombs, a geometrical and mathematical study of the unusual architectonic

characteristics of the Basilica and St. Helen's Mausoleum, built in the catacombs area, shows that these buildings were part of a single architectonic plan, very likely designed for coding data useful to locate Peter's burial site unambiguously, just in the area of the cubicle mentioned, a result to be verified by archeologists.

In her Jesus' life, she does not report any date in terms of Julian calendar, nevertheless her literary work is full of chronological elements. According to her writings, Jesus was born on Kislev 25 (Valtorta, 2001: vol. 1, 458; vol. 2, 375). Moreover, she explicitly states that in the year before his death, the Passover Eve, 14 of Nisan of the lunar-solar calendar, was on a Friday (Valtorta, 2001: vol. 6, 96-125) and that Passover fell on the Sabbath (Valtorta, 2001: vol. 6, 143). The crucifixion is set one year later, on a Friday, in agreement with the four canonical Gospels. She also writes (Valtorta, 1993) that just in the day of his death Jesus aged 1737 weeks, a curious unit of time. Although it is unexpected that Maria Valtorta sets Jesus' birth on Kislev 25, nevertheless, as it has been recently shown (De Caro et al., 2022), this choice could be also grounded historically. Therefore, Kislev 25 could be considered the most unexpected but historically meaningful indication about Jesus' birth in a mystical literary work.

Now, after the previous findings emerged by studying Maria Valtorta's writings (Matricciani & De Caro, 2017; Matricciani & De Caro, 2018; Matricciani & De Caro, 2020; De Caro et al., 2020; De Caro et al., 2021b), we challenge her chronological elements to agree with each other. Indeed, the verification of the self−consistency of these chronological elements would imply they are not the mere result of her literary creativity, therefore arising new open questions: for theologians, about origin and reason of their presence in her mystical writings; for historians, about their validity and utility in studying the historical Jesus. In this regard, it is important to underline that, to our knowledge, the literary Corpus of Maria Valtorta is the first case of mystical literature that can be studied and checked with the tools of many scientific disciplines, such as astronomy, meteorology, statistics, geography, archeology, history, information theory applied to Italian texts. In other words, this multi-disciplinary approach applicable to her writings represents the extreme novelty of the research here furtherly discussed.

After this introduction, in Section 2 we summarize all possible dates of Jesus' death, established after astronomical and calendar studies, in connection with a possible harmonization of the different Gospels' traditions about the Last Supper. In Section 3, we establish the age of Jesus at his death in relation to 1737 weeks, mentioned by Maria Valtorta, by correlating the date of Crucifixion with the date of birth set on Kislev 25. Based on her writings, in Section 4 we determine the dates of Epiphany and massacre of all children under age 2, described by Matthew (Mt 2) and in Section 5 we determine a date of the Baptism of Jesus and birthday of John the Baptist, related by Luke to the birth of Jesus. In Section 6 we summarize the obtained results.

2. Crucifixion Date

Crucifixion happened when Pontius Pilate ruled Judea (Tacitus, Ann. XV. 44; Josephus, AJ XVIII. 35; 55-64; 85-89; 177), from 26 to 36 AC (Wright et al., 2002). The four canonical Gospels agree in reporting that Jesus died in the afternoon of a Friday. For Matthew, Mark and Luke (Synoptics) that Friday was Nisan 15, the day of Passover. For John, that Friday was not Passover, because there are elements referring to Nisan 14 (John, 18, 28; 19, 31). In principle, the choices for resolving this chronological discrepancy are three: 1) the Synoptics are right and John is wrong; 2) John is right and the Synoptics are wrong; 3) there is a way of harmonizing both traditions (Shepherd, 1961). To solve the above chronological discrepancy, some scholars (Meier, 2006) have suggested, for example for the Mark's tradition, that Mk 14, 1 and 14, 12-16, which are the only passages in which Mark refers to Passover, would have been inserted later in the actual account of the Last Supper which, consequently, would not originally have been Passover, in accordance with what it seems to emerge from the Johannine tradition. Analogous conclusions can be made for the other synoptic Gospels and, for this reason, many New Testament's scholars prefer John's chronology.

Nevertheless, although harmonizing John and the Synoptics could be considered not a sufficient condition of historicity, of the three above possibilities the third one should be preferable, because it allows to highlight the roots of a common tradition about one of the most important facts of Jesus' life: the Last Supper. A recent paper discusses all the proposed solutions to dating the Last-Supper, indicating among the latest solutions, the modified hypothesis of different methods of reckoning to the Last Supper Day (Rosik, 2020). Therefore, in the following sub-sections, we first recall and discuss the possible crucifixion dates, then we discuss how to make the Last Supper's tradition of Synoptics and John agree, proposing a solution based on a different method of reckoning to the Last Supper Day by Pharisees and Sadducees (Strack & Billerbeck, 1924).

2.1. Possible Crucifixion Dates

In Table 1 we have listed the possible dates of Jesus' death, according to astronomical calculations, most of which have been discussed in (La Greca & De Caro, 2017; Finegan, 1998; Fotheringham, 1934; Nothaf, 2012a; Schaefer, 1990; Bond, 2013; Humphreys & Waddington, 1983; Humphreys & Waddington, 1992; Ruggles, 1990). The dates when Nisan 14 was Friday (according to John) or Nisan 15 (according to the Synoptics) are highlighted in bold. The years indicated in column 1 are calculated according to the Christian Era, established by Dionysius Exiguus, recently re-examined and confirmed (La Greca & De Caro, 2019; De Caro et al., 2021a). The days indicated refer to the Julian calendar, with the convention that the day starts at the sixth hour of Nisan 14 and ends at the sixth hour of Nisan 15. "E" stands for embolismic year (year of 13 luni-solar months).

Column 2 lists the day of first visibility of the crescent moon (with indicated

Table 1. Julian dates of Nisan 14 astronomically calculated from 26 to 36 AC. When Nisan 14 or 15 falls on Friday, the Julian date is highlighted in bold. The only two consecutive Passovers occurred on Saturday, as described by Maria Valtorta in her Jesus' life, are in bold red.

Year	Beginning of crescent Moon (Fraction illuminated, %)	14 Nisan	15 Nisan
26	7 April (3.4)	Sunday, 21 April	Monday, 22 April
27	27 March (1.1)	Thursday, 10 April	**Friday, 11 April**
	28 March (4.7)	**Friday, 11 April**	Saturday, 12 April
28	16 March (2.8)	Tuesday, 30 March	Wednesday, 31 March
———	—————	———————	———————
28 E	14 April (1.3)	Wednesday, 28 April	Thursday, 29 April
	15 April (4.9)	Thursday, 29 April	**Friday, 30 April**
29	4 April (3.5)	Monday, 18 April	Tuesday, 19 April
30	24 March (3.4)	**Friday, 7 April**	Saturday, 8 April
31	13 March (3.3)	Tuesday, 27 March	Wednesday, 28 March
———	—————	———————	———————
31 E	11 April (1.4)	Wednesday, 25 April	Thursday, 26 April
	12 April (4.6)	Thursday, 26 April	**Friday, 27 April**
32	31 March (4.1)	Monday, 14 April	Tuesday, 15 April
33	20 March (2.4)	**Friday, 3 April**	**Saturday, 4 April**
———	—————	———————	———————
33 E	18 April (1.2)	Saturday, 2 May	Sunday, 3 May
	19 April (5.0)	Sunday, 3 May	Monday, 4 May
34	10 March (3.6)	Wednesday, 24 March	Thursday, 25 March
———	—————	———————	———————
34 E	8 April (2.3)	Thursday, 22 April	**Friday, 23 April**
	9 April (with a delay of 1 day)	**Friday, 23 April**	**Saturday, 24 April**
35	29 March (3.4)	Tuesday, 12 April	Wednesday, 13 April
36	17 March (1.3)	Saturday, 31 March	Sunday, 1 April
	18 March (4.5)	Sunday, 1 April	Monday, 2 April
———	—————	———————	———————
36 E	16 April (3.3)	Monday, 30 April	Tuesday, 1 March

the fraction of moon's surface illuminated), calculated with the astronomical software Skychart (Chevalley, 2006). The first day of Nisan starts at the sunset of the Julian day and ends at the sunset of next day. There are also some variants occurring when the moon was not visible, either for a low percentage of surface illuminated or for bad weather, therefore, delaying the beginning of the next month by 1 day. We have considered explicitly this hypothesis only when Nisan 14 or Nisan 15 falls on Friday, and when the fraction of moon's surface illumi-

nated is 2.5% at maximum, because for larger values the month just finished would have already been of 30 days and luni-solar months cannot be of 31 days (De Caro et al., 2022). In favorable meteorological conditions, the beginning of the month of Nisan could have been anticipated by 1 day, but we have assumed that this occurred only when the fraction of moon's surface illuminated was at least 1% (De Caro et al., 2022).

Allowing the variation of the illuminated fraction of moon's surface in a finite range for setting the beginning of lunar months, the astronomical-allowed crucifixion dating does not depend on the criterion assumed to set the effective lunar crescent visibility (Doggett & Schaefer, 1994). In this way, all possible dates are obtained.

Column 3 lists the date corresponding to Nisan 14, day of crucifixion according to John. Column 4 list the dates corresponding to Nisan 15, day of crucifixion according to Mark, Luke and Matthew (Synoptic Gospels). The dates when Nisan 14 was Friday (according to John) or Nisan 15 (according to the Synoptics) in Table 1 are highlighted in bold. Notice that the delay of 1 month in the beginning of the following year could make the Passover fall at the beginning of May. This situation was possible in the Babylonian calendar (Parker & Dubberstein, 1956) and was explicitly considered (Finegan, 1998: p. 365) also in the dates of crucifixion of the year 33, reported in Table 1.

Indeed, in the Jewish luni-solar calendar of 2000 years ago the beginning of a month was fixed by direct observation of the first crescent moon, not by looking at a pre-compiled table. The year started with the month of Nisan, at the first new moon after the vernal equinox, which 2000 years ago occurred on March 23 of the Julian calendar. In some years a month was added at the end of the year for realigning astronomically the calendar with the seasons because a lunar month lasts 29.53 days and years are of 12 months of 29 or 30 days, never 31. Now, 12 × 29.5 = 354 days, which is about 11 days less than 365.24 days of the solar year. Therefore, about every 3 years, 3 × 11 = 33 days, a thirteen (intercalary) month was added, although not known when. This extra month was termed "second month of Adar", Adar II, as Adar is the last month of the year, and its insertion was decided by the Sanhedrin (Finegan, 1998: p. 38) according to the following rules: "The rabbis taught, it is stated, that "a year may be intercalated on three grounds: on account of the premature state of the corn crops; or that of the fruit trees; or on account of the lateness of the tequfah (season). Any two of these reasons can justify intercalation, but not one alone". (…) The tequfah of Nisan… began at the vernal equinox when the sun enters the constellation of Aries". Therefore, even if the Sun was already in Aries but the ears of corn were not ripe, the liturgy planned on Nisan 16, the offering to the Temple of the first harvested ears of barley or wheat, could not occur and Passover was delayed by introducing the second month of Adar. Also, Flavius Josephus (I century AD; Jewish Antiquities, III, 247-248) recalls the same rules on determining the date of Passover since Moses established it.

At Moses times, however, the sun rose exactly in the East (vernal equinox) in

the constellation of Aries (La Greca & De Caro, 2017) but in the I century AC the sun rose in the constellation of Pisces, because of equinox precession. Therefore, Passover could not be celebrated near the equinox, about March 23, because the ancient rule of the Sun rising in the constellation of Aries would have been violated. Indeed, 2000 years ago the Sun entered the constellation of Aries about 3 days after March 23 (Chevalley, 2006). Therefore, if Nisan 15, day of Passover, occurred before March 26, one of the conditions imposed by Moses' tradition, Sun in Aries, was not fulfilled and another month was probably added, making the year embolismic. The studies on the Babylonian calendar (Parker & Dubberstein, 1956), whose series of embolismic years are known, also excluded the cases in which Nisan 15 would fall up less than 3 days from the vernal equinox. This calendar affected (Finegan, 1998: pp. 33-39) very much the Jewish calendar. This variability of factors in Table 1 causes the presence of more than one chronological solution.

In summary, by assuming the chronology of John, we get the following Julian dates for Friday, day of crucifixion (Nisan 14):

a) 11 April 27. This date assumes a delay of 1 day in the beginning of Nisan. The delay is plausible because the moon's surface illuminated was only 1.1%, hardly visible on March 27, first day of the new moon. Very likely, the month of Nisan started on March 28. This dating is hardly reconcilable with the fifteenth year of reign of the emperor Tiberius, beginning of John the Baptist's ministry and Jesus' public life, according to Luke (La Greca & De Caro, 2017).

b) 7 April 30. It is the most probable date proposed by scholars since the end of the XIX century, because it correlates well both with the patristic tradition on the age of Jesus at his death, about 33 years, and with the date of Herod's death set in 4 BC (Finegan, 1998: p. 367).

c) 3 April 33. Before the studies of the end of XIX and beginning XX centuries, this date was considered the most probable (Nothaf, 2012a: pp. 273-274), but always assuming Herod died in 4 BC (Bond, 2013), (Finegan, 1998: pp. 291-301). It was re-proposed in the 1980's (Humphreys & Waddington, 1983; Humphreys & Waddington, 1992) because of the occurrence of an eclipse of moon on the day of crucifixion correlated, by the authors, with Peter's speech on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2, 20, Joel 3, 4). Other authors (Schaefer, 1990; Ruggles, 1990), however, doubt the eclipse was visible from Jerusalem.

d) 23 April 34. It is a possible date if (La Greca & De Caro, 2017): (a) an embolismic year is assumed, because in March, as evidenced in Table 1, Passover would have fallen almost in coincidence with the day of the equinox (only 2 days later), and (b) if a delay of 1 day is introduced in Nisan because of a possible insufficient visibility of the crescent moon the first day due to adverse meteorological conditions.

According to the Synoptics, the day of crucifixion was Nisan 15 not Nisan 14. In this case Friday Nisan 15 could correspond to 11 April 27, 30 April 28, 27 April 31 or 23 April 34. This last date, therefore, without supposing any delay in the beginning of the lunar month, would have been Friday 15 Nisan, according

to the Synoptics. It is interesting to notice the year 34 is the only one that can always be a possible year of crucifixion, whichever is the chronology considered. The other years, in fact, depend on the chronology assumed, Synoptics' or John's.

Maria Valtorta never indicates the year of Crucifixion. In her writings there are many narrative elements that convey chronological information like days of worship rest, references to major Jewish holydays, market days, seasons, months related both to the Jewish lunar-solar and to the Julian calendars, moon phases. No date, however, is stated explicitly with respect to the Julian calendar, except for a single case (Matricciani & De Caro, 2017), but with no reference to the year. Indeed, Maria Valtorta (Valtorta, 2001: vol. 6, 153) explicitly states that in the year before Jesus' death the Passover (Nisan 15) fell on Saturday. Therefore, in that year Nisan 14 was a Friday. According to the Gospels, the crucifixion day was also a Friday, Nisan 14 for the Johannine tradition, Nisan 15 for the Synoptic tradition. Thus, Maria Valtorta's narration of Jesus' life implies that in his last two years Passover fell always on Saturday. This strong chronological constraint can be compared with the astronomical determination of the date of Jesus' crucifixion reported in Table 1. With the red color we have highlighted the only pair of consecutive years in which Passover can be set on Saturday.

In conclusion, the only crucifixion's dating compatible with Maria Valtorta narration of Jesus' life is 23 April 34 (Matricciani & De Caro, 2017). It is worth noting that this dating is rarely indicated by scholars, but it is the only crucifixion's date that make the Synoptics and John agree (La Greca & De Caro, 2020) about the Last-Supper chronology, as discussed in the following sub-section.

2.2. How to Make the Synoptics Agree with John about the Last-Supper Chronology

Many scholars date the crucifixion either on the year 30 or 33 (Nothaf, 2012a; Finegan, 1998). The year 34 could be a more valid alternative, because it makes the Synoptics and John agree about the chronology of a fundamental fact of Jesus' life. Indeed, Strack and Billerbeck (Strack & Billerbeck, 1924) hypothesized that in some years the Pharisees and Sadducees could calculate the beginning of the month of Nisan with 1-day difference. The cause would be related to Leviticus 23, 10-11: "… you shall bring a sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest, who shall wave the sheaf before the Lord that it may be acceptable for you. On the day after the Sabbath the priest shall do this." The rite had to be done on Nisan 16 and, at the same time, it had to fall on the day after the Sabbath, because shaking the sheaves of the first fruits required a considerable effort and, therefore, physical work forbidden on Sabbath.

If, however, Nisan 15 fell on a Friday, then Nisan 16 would have coincided with a Saturday and the rite of offering the sheaves that started the calculation of the seven weeks establishing the Pentecost, could not take place, according to the prescription of Leviticus, which expressly required "the day after the Sabbath". This could be the case in the year of Jesus' crucifixion. The priests of the Temple

followed this Levitical prescription carefully, therefore, when Nisan 15 coincided with a Friday, they delayed the beginning of Nisan by 1 day. On the contrary, the Pharisees, and a part of the people less linked to the Sadducees, calculated the beginning of Nisan according to the actual new moon. Indeed, if Nisan 15 fell on a Friday, they did not delay Passover by 1 day, because they had no servile work to do for offering sheaves in the Temple the following day. Therefore, in the year when Jesus was crucified, the Pharisees and a part of the people would have celebrated Passover on Friday. On the contrary, Sadducees, priests, their families, servants, and guards of the Temple, in other words, all those who directly or indirectly were depending on the ritual activities of the Temple, would have delayed Passover to the next day, the Sabbath. In conclusion, the Synoptics would have described the Pharisees' and common people's Passover; John would have described the Priests' and Sadducees' one.

Although this explanation is very plausible, it has not gained much consensus among scholars, despite being well motivated by the scriptural reference to Leviticus. The reason is the obvious fact that not in every year Nisan 15 fell on a Friday. We have already mentioned that this certainly occurred in four years: 11 April 27; 30 April 28; 27 April 31; 23 April 34.

Strack and Billerbeck's hypothesis, indeed, cannot be applied to the years 30 and 33, considered by most scholars a possible date of the crucifixion. In fact, both in 30 and in 33, Friday coincides with Nisan 14, not with 15, therefore with the eve not with Passover. Consequently, in both years Nisan 16 should have been the day after Saturday (see Table 1). The prescription on the day of the offering of sheaves, therefore, would have been already satisfied without delaying the beginning of Nisan. For this reason, the years 30 and 33 are considered compatible only with John's chronology.

To fully reconcile the Synoptics with John it suffices to consider a year when the full moon and Passover fell on Friday, not on Saturday. The year 34 satisfies both conditions hypothesized by Strack and Billerbeck: on Thursday evening, 22 April 34, Jesus would have celebrated Passover with his disciples (Last Supper), because 15 days since a new moon had just elapsed, after sunset. The priests, however, for the reasons explained above, were forced to delay Passover by 1 day.

Friday 11 April 27 or Friday 30 April 28, other possible days coinciding with 15 Nisan, are too early to be reconcilable with the chronological constraint of being in the fifteenth year of Emperor Tiberius (Lk, 3).

Friday 27 April 31, which may have been Nisan 15 in the case of an embolismic year, must also be excluded because, as shown in Table 1, on 12 April 31, i.e., the beginning of Nisan, a substantial fraction 4.6%, of the lunar disk was already visible at sunset, because 53 hours had passed from the new moon (i.e., conjunction with the sun), occurred at about 13:30 on April 10. For this reason, several scholars (Finegan, 1998: p. 363) anticipate the beginning of Nisan of the year 31 by 1 day, therefore forcing Nisan 15 on Thursday April 26. Therefore, the eve of Passover was not a Friday. For 23 April 34 the astronomical analysis

shows that the situation is completely different. To make Nisan 15 a Friday would require that the beginning of Nisan occurred only 30 hours after the new moon, that is 1 day earlier than in the year 31.

In conclusion, 23 April 34 must be considered the only date which allows to reconcile the different Gospels' traditions about the Last Supper. Moreover, this dating fully harmonizes with Jesus' birth at the beginning of the Christian Era and with the other chronological information reported by the Gospels about his age at the beginning of the public ministry, and the number of pilgrimage feasts reported by John, which lead to an age of about 33 years at his death.

3. Jesus' Birth Date and Age at Death According to Maria Valtorta

According to Maria Valtorta, Jesus was born on Kislev 25 (Valtorta, 2001: vol. 1, 458; vol. 2, 375). Recently, we have shown (De Caro et al., 2022) that Kislev 25 and Tevet 6 can almost coincide, within a maximum shift of one day, with January 6, the Eastern tradition dates of Nativity and Epiphany, respectively. Nobody knows how many leap years in excess have been introduced in the Julian Calendar before the beginning of the Christian Era. Following (Fedalto, 2012), in (De Caro et al., 2022) it was assumed that leap years were inserted every 3 years instead of 4. Therefore, the shift of one day between Kislev 25 and January 6 can be also readily explained by considering a further leap year in excess, in the year 6 BC. Indeed, Caesar Augustus perhaps corrected the wrong leap-years sequence in 8 BC, by ordering not to introduce leap years for 15 years to compensate those in excess. But it is also possible that the correction was introduced only after 6 BC, with the last leap year in excess in that year. In this way, 8 January 1 AC of the Julian calendar, with the corrected leap years, was 6 January 1 AC of the effective calendar of 2000 years ago characterized by the wrong leap-years sequence. Moreover, this January 6 of the wrong Julian calendar was Kislev 25 of the luni-solar calendar (De Caro et al., 2022), with a perfect coincidence between Kislev 25 and January 6 for the Nativity. Let us also note that the coincidence of Kislev 25 and January 6 can occur only if the year of Jesus' birth is 1 AC, in agreement with Dionysius Exiguus' calculation of the beginning of the Christian Era, and the Epiphany can be set exactly 1 year later, on 6 January 2 AC (De Caro et al., 2022), on Tevet 6 of the luni-solar calendar, according to the IV-century Syrian source of Constitutiones Apostolorum.

Moreover, from 8 January 1 AC to 23 April 34 AC there are 33 solar years of 365.25 days plus further 105 days, for a total of 12,158 days. If the Nativity Day was 6 January 1 AC, for the excessive introduction of two leap years, after the beginning of the Christian Era, two leap years were not counted for compensating this astronomical shift of the Julian calendar. Therefore, the total number of days is always 12,158, which is just 1737 weeks, minus one day, exactly Jesus' life duration according to Maria Valtorta (Valtorta, 1993), an unexpected coincidence deserving more attention.

This integer number could be the result of a calculation she made and passed

off as a mystical revelation. If this were the case, however, we would expect a calculation starting on 25 December 1 BC, Western Nativity Day, and ending on 3 April 33, day of crucifixion according to the Catholic Church who had just celebrated on 3 April 1933 the anniversary of Jesus' death, 1900 years, an event she knew (Valtorta, 2006). These dates do not give 1737 weeks, because there is about one year less. Curiously, her alleged mystical experiences began on Good Friday 23 April 1943 (Matricciani & De Caro, 2017), an "anniversary" of Jesus' crucifixion if set on Friday 23 April 34. The coincidence is striking because it is rare that Good Friday coincides with 23 April: the last time it was in 1886 and the next time it will be in 2038.

In synthesis, Maria Valtorta several times writes that Jesus was born on Kislev 25, which is first day of the Feast of Temple Dedication, but never writes a Julian date, neither December 25 nor January 6, nor a year, either for birth or for Crucifixion. However, the beginning of the Feast of Temple Dedication, associated with a life lasting 1737 weeks, leads just to the Eastern tradition of 6 January 1 AC for the Nativity Day if the Crucifixion is set on 23 April 34. An unexpected coherent hidden chronological framework gradually emerges from Maria Valtorta's narration of Jesus' life.

Let us now calculate the frequency that Kislev 25 coincides with December 25 or January 6. Figure 1 shows the histogram of the conversion of Kislev 25 to the Julian calendar, according to the reconstruction (Parker & Dubberstein, 1956) of the Babylonian calendar relative to a period of 670 years. A very similar histogram could be obtained for the Jewish luni-solar calendar, even though this latter had no prefixed beginning for months. We can notice that the counts are quite uniform. A greater number of years would have given a smooth plateau. Its width is about 30 days, namely the duration of the lunar month, as expected.
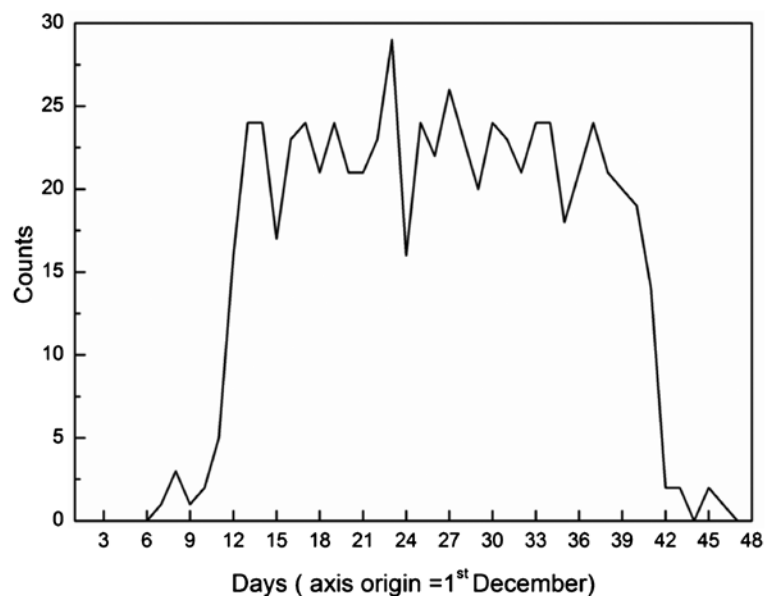
Figure 1. Frequency of Kislev 25 converted to the Julian calendar, according to the reconstruction of the Babylonian calendar relative to a period of 670 years.

From March 27 to December 1, origin of the abscissae in Figure 1, there are 249 days; from Nisan 14 to Kislev 25 there are, on average, also 249 days, i.e., 8 months and 11 days; therefore, for the Babylonian calendar, Nisan 14 almost never fell before March 27. The lower limit is given by the small peak after 3 days before the plateau when Nisan 15 coincides with March 25, as confirmation of what discussed till now on the results of Table 1. December 25 and January 6 fall, respectively, 24 and 36 days from the origin, therefore both are on the plateau. Consequently Kislev 25 coincides with December 25 or January 6 with the same frequency, given by (uniform distribution) 1/30, that is 3.3%.

Moreover, let us notice that 1737 weeks gives 12,159 days. From 6 January 1 AC to 23 April 34 there are 12,158 days, one less. According to the Gospels, the crucifixion happened on Friday. Therefore, the birth should be set on Saturday. This is the further chronological information contained in an age expressed in weeks. Effectively, January 8 of the year 1 AC, calculated with modern tools and corresponding to January 6 of the Julian calendar in use at that time because of the wrong calculation of leap years, was Saturday.

The frequency that Kislev 25 falls on Saturday and on a given day of the month is $(1/30) \times (1/7) = 1/210$, less than 0.5%. It is striking that January 6 of the year 1 AC satisfies all preceding conditions. The frequency 0.5% is enough small to exclude the case, implying even an historical root for this Jesus' birth dating (De Caro et al., 2022), a point that should attract the attention of scholars, for future research.

In conclusion, Maria Valtorta's indications that Jesus was born on Kislev 25 together with his age of 1737 weeks have interesting historical implications, because they relate Gospels' chronological implicit elements, Nativity Day's traditions and Dionysius Exiguus' calculation of the beginning of Christian Era.

4. The Date of the Massacre of the Innocents and the Epiphany

In Maria Valtorta (Valtorta, 2001: vol. 1, 463) the massacre of the Innocents, described by Matthew (Mt 2, 16), really happened and was known by emperor Augustus. Among the Greek-Latin pagan texts, only one mention of this event has reached us, in the Saturnaliorum convivia by Macrobius (IV-V centuries), who attributes a series of sentences to the emperor Augustus. In one of these we read: (Saturn. 2, 4, 11): "When Augustus got the news that in Syria Herod, king of the Jews, had ordered to kill all the children under two years of age, including his own son, Augustus remarked: "It is better to be Herod's pig rather than his son""". According to most scholars this citation, containing an evident mistake regarding the age of Herod's son, has no historical value but invented by Macrobius. Other scholars (Maselli, 2007) think that this source has a historical foundation.

Let us note that the Magi arrived in Judea when Jesus was already able to walk, although held up by Mary and one of the Magi hands (Valtorta, 2001: vol. 1, p. 213). More precisely, Maria Valtorta indicates Jesus' age between 9 and 12

months. Even for Matthew, the episode should not have occurred few days after Jesus' birth because he refers to him with the word παιδίον, a term suitable only for a child 1 or 2 years old, in agreement with the calendar analysis discussed in (De Caro et al., 2022).

In Maria Valtorta we find an important chronological datum related to the escape into Egypt by Mary and Joseph: "Then you went away … How distressing it was to have no news of you after the slaughter! Alphaeus went as far as Bethlehem … 'They went away' they said. But how could we believe them, if they had a mortal hatred of you in town, where the innocent blood was still red and the ruins were still smoking and they blamed you for the blood that had been shed? He went to Hebron and then to the Temple because it was Zacharias' turn" (Valtorta, 2001: vol. 9, p. 210). Therefore, Alphaeus, Joseph's brother, would have left for Bethlehem as soon as the news of the massacre of the Innocents arrived at Nazareth. He would have reached Bethlehem while the ruins were still smoking for the fire ignited by Herod's soldiers, as described by Maria Valtorta. This detail underlines that Alphaeus arrived at Bethlehem within few days since the massacre.

Perkins (Perkins, 2002) notes that the journey from Judea to Galilee took about three days. According to Maria Valtorta, given the atrocity carried out by Herod, the news of the massacre reached Nazareth as soon as possible. Alphaeus, Joseph's brother would have reached Bethlehem in few days, worried about his brother's life, to be able to see the ruins still smoking.

She writes that the adoration of the Magi (Epiphany) was during an afternoon, and that at the sunset of the same day they left for the return journey (Valtorta, 2001: vol. 1, pp. 209-213). The Magi travelled, therefore, only few kilometers before camping for the night, during which they had the dream warning them not to pass through Jerusalem (Mt 2, 12). That same night, as soon as the Magi left Bethlehem (Mt 2, 13), Joseph too was warned in a dream to leave for Egypt. Matthew, therefore, highlights that Joseph left for Egypt as soon as the Magi left Bethlehem. Therefore, the massacre was imminent.

According to Maria Valtorta, the bad news would have quickly reached Galilee and prompted Alphaeus to reach Bethlehem, then Hebron and, finally, Jerusalem, in search of the priest Zechariah who was there because the turn of his class, the eighth, fell just in those days. The turnover of the priestly classes has been carefully reconstructed (La Greca & De Caro, 2017). In the week of September 20-27 of 2 BC there was a turn of the priestly class of Abiah (La Greca & De Caro, 2017). Therefore, after 24 weeks, from March 7 to 14 of 1 BC there was another, and then from August 22 to 29 of 1 BC, and from February 6 to 13 of 1 AC, from July 23 to 30 of 1 AC, from 7 to 14 January of 2 AC. Consequently, the eighth class would have had a turn in the week of January 7 to 14 of 2 AC, and the massacre of the Innocents could have occurred in close temporal connection with this turn. If Joseph and Mary had just fled to Egypt at the beginning of 2 AC, Jesus could have been at most one-year old, confirming what Maria Valtorta writes. Once again, the whole chronological framework derived so far is consis-

tent, because the 1737 weeks of the life of Jesus, starting from the crucifixion set on 23 April 34, lead us to the Nativity on 6 January 1 AC.

This sequence of details written by Maria Valtorta allows to associate a precise date with the massacre of the Innocents. As Alphaeus finds Zacharias still in the Temple then his turn was not over. By subtracting a week from January 14 of 2 AC, that is, the estimated time for the bad news of the massacre to reach Nazareth and Alpheus to reach Bethlehem, we arrive close to the Eastern tradition of January 6 for the Epiphany.

Thus, Maria Valtorta's narration regarding the Adoration of the Magi and the massacre of the Innocents places the two events very near, approximately within a week. The reconstruction of the turns of the class of Abiah, in relation to the narrative elements reported by her, allows us to conclude that the Adoration of the Magi (Epiphany) could be placed also on 6 January 2 AC, in agreement with the Eastern Church tradition.

5. Dates of Jesus' Baptism and John the Baptist's Birth

According to Maria Valtorta, after his Baptism, Jesus would have gone to the Desert of Judas on the Mount of Fasting "at the end of the Tebeth moon" (Valtorta, 2001: vol. 2, p. 23), i.e., during the last quarter. The public life of Jesus described by her lasts three years and few months, because four Passovers are mentioned. This chronological datum agrees with John, although he mentions explicitly only three Passovers (Jn 2, 13; 6, 4; 12, 1). Moreover, in (Jn 5, 1), we find: "there was a feast of the Jews". There are reasons (Finegan, 1998: pp. 283-284) to set this feast after a winter (Jn 4, 35) in a year of public ministry different from those corresponding to the other three Passovers, leading to three years and a few months that include four Passovers.

If the crucifixion was on 23 April 34, the month of Tevet, to which the narration refers, is in the winter of the years 30 - 31. In the year 30, the month of Tevet begun at sunset on December 14 (Chevalley, 2006). The last quarter of the Tevet moon of that year, therefore, lasted from January 6 to January 13. These data allow us to hypothesize that even the date of Jesus' baptism, calculated from a chronological analysis of Maria Valtorta's writings, is compatible with the tradition of the Eastern Church, which sets his baptism on January 6. Indeed, in year 31, January 6 was Tevet 23 in terms of the Jewish lunar-solar calendar. Starting from Bethabara, on the Jordan river, where Origen affirms Jesus was baptized (Mommert, 1903), and adding few days of walking to reach the mountainous region of the Desert of Judas, we arrive just to the end of Tevet, as affirmed in her narration. In terms of Julian calendar Jesus' baptism fell just on his thirtieth birthday. In terms of luni-solar calendar Jesus was about thirty years (Lk 3, 23).

In Maria Valtorta's writings it is also possible to relate the beginning of the public lives of Jesus and John the Baptist. Jesus says: "he was the Precursor and he preceded Me by only a few months" (Valtorta, 2001: vol. 4, p. 292). Therefore,

if the baptism was in January of the year 31, then the beginning of the ministry of the Baptist must be set in the year 30. By considering that the end of the XXII year of the reign of Tiberius, when the emperor died, falls in the month of Adar of the year 37 AC (La Greca & De Caro, 2017), to arrive at the XV year indicated by Luke (Lk 3, 1 - 3) as the beginning of John's ministry, we must subtract 7 years, therefore arriving at the month of Adar of 30 AC, at the end of winter, in agreement with the chronological framework determined.

Luke also relates the births of Jesus and John the Baptist (Lk 1, 36). From Luke we know that at the Annunciation, Elizabeth, a relative of Mary and mother of John the Baptist, was in the sixth month of pregnancy (Lk 1, 36). Zacharias, John's father, hears of Elizabeth's pregnancy while officiating at the Temple (Lk 1, 8). As already mentioned, Zacharias belonged to the eighth priestly class (Lk 1, 5), and the turnover of this class allows (La Greca & De Caro, 2017) to date the birth of the Baptist and, indirectly, that of Jesus because of the chronological link given by Luke (Lk 1, 36). It had to be the Feast of Tabernacles (Tishri 15 - 22), not Yom Kippur, because only the high priest could enter the holiest part of the Temple during this solemn fasting day, and Zechariah was not a high priest. On the other hand, Luke clarifies that "when the days of his service are completed" (Lk 1:23), Zechariah returns home. It was therefore a period of priestly service extended over several days.

In 2 BC the feast of Tabernacles fell in October, with Tishri 15 coincident with October 14 or 15 of the Julian calendar (Chevalley, 2006). However, that year, also the month before, Abiah class went to Jerusalem to officiate according to the turnover provided by the alternation of the 24 classes (La Greca & De Caro, 2017). In fact, from 20 to 27 September, a turn of the class of Abiah, to which Zacharias belonged, fell outside the commanded pilgrimage feasts, during which all the priestly classes were called to be present in the liturgy of the Temple. Luke, however, does not make any reference to a feast, in this case it should have been the Tabernacles, but he simply speaks of Abiah's turn. Therefore, we should place the angel's announcement to Zechariah in the week of September 20-27 of 2 BC, and not during the Feast of Tabernacles, which began in the middle of October of 2 BC. Therefore, John's conception can be set when Zacharias returned to the mountains of Judah (Lk 1, 39), after the turn of September 20-27 of 2 BC. The period related to the turn of Abiah class should be preferred with respect to the Feast of Tabernacles also from a statistical point of view, because "according to the practice of the priestly service, he (Zacharias) was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord to burn incense" (Lk 1, 9). Indeed, during pilgrimage feasts the priests of all 24 classes were present in Jerusalem and the probability to be chosen among many, would be much lower than during the turn of a single priest class.

Thus, Elizabeth's first month of pregnancy coincided with the eighth month of the Jewish lunar-solar calendar, and the sixth month can coincide either with the end of a 13-month embolismic year (Adar II) or, if the outgoing year was only of 12 months, with the beginning (Nisan) of the new year. Indeed, 6 months

counted in the inclusive mode of the extremes, starting from the eighth month, lead to the thirteenth month, which can be either Adar II or Nisan. If Jesus was born on Kislev 25, during the ninth month of the lunar calendar, his conception occurred nine months earlier, either in the month of Adar of a 12-month year, or in the month of Adar II if of 13 months. The chronological constraint that Jesus was born on Kislev 25 allows us to exclude that his conception occurred in the month of Nisan, that is, only 8 months earlier. Therefore, it must necessarily have occurred at either Adar II or Adar. If we add the further chronological constraint deduced from Luke about Elizabeth's six-month pregnancy either in Adar II or in Nisan, when the Annunciation to Mary occurred, we obtain a unique calendar solution for Jesus' conception: Adar II. Therefore, the information Kislev 25 as the day of Jesus' birth, related to Luke's narration of the Nativity and the birth of the Baptist, implies that the year, when Jesus was born, must have been embolismic. In (De Caro et al., 2022), we have shown that the year 1 BC could have been embolismic. In this case, the beginning of the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple (Kislev 25) can fall on January 6, 1 AC, the day of Jesus' birth according to the Eastern tradition.

Jesus' birth on January 6 is related in the Eastern tradition to the angel's Annunciation to Mary on April 6, 1 BC. At the beginning of April, during the angel's Annunciation to Mary, Elizabeth was in the sixth month of pregnancy, as specified by Luke, being the conception of the Baptist at the beginning of 2 October BC. We recall that the whole chronological reconstruction obtained echoes an ancient tradition of the Eastern Church which sets the announcement of the angel to Zechariah on September 23. The traditional date of June 24 for the Baptist's birth is closely related to that of the angel's announcement to Zachariah, by adding 9 months. Statistical data show that the most probable duration of a pregnancy, from conception, is 38 weeks, 40 weeks from the last menstruation (Chow & Dattani, 2009) with a variation of one week in most cases. If we add 38 weeks to the first ten days of October, we arrive at the last ten days of June, in line with the traditional date of the Baptist's birthday.

From Maria Valtorta we get further information that John the Baptist was born in the first days of a lunar month, in summer: "It is a beautiful summer evening, still clear in the last rays of the sun, and yet the sky is already decorated with a falcate moon that looks like a silver comma attached to a large deep blue cloth" (Valtorta, 2001: vol. 1, p. 139). Elizabeth's labor is nocturnal and lasts from the evening to sunrise. According to astronomical calculations (Chevalley, 2006) it is possible to verify that the crescent moon visible at sunset is compatible either with the beginning of the third decade of July of the year 1 BC, or with the middle of the third decade of June of the year 1 BC. The latter period can be related to the priestly turn of 20-27 September of 2 BC of the class of Abiah. The beginning of the third decade of July of the year 1 BC, on the other hand, can be related to the turn of the class of Abiah during the feast of Tabernacles in 2 BC, which fell in mid-October. Therefore, the astronomical detail reported by Maria Valtorta, in this case, is not sufficient to uniquely determine the birth of the

Baptist.

There is, however, a further descriptive element that makes unique the chronological reconstruction. In fact, there is a reference to June implicitly contained by the smell of hay dried in the sun: "From the meadows, there is a strong smell of hay dried in the sun" (Valtorta, 2001: vol. 1, p. 139). Therefore, the Baptist was born in the middle of the third decade of June, after 38 weeks of gestation. In conclusion perfect compatibility is achieved with the date of tradition, June 24, 1 BC.

6. Conclusion

We have investigated the possibility of finding a coherent chronological background in Maria Valtorta's literary work about Jesus' life. Our investigation indicates 6 January 1 AC as the day of birth, because it correlates very well both with Kislev 25 and with the Crucifixion on 23 April 34 AC, the only date—among those astronomically allowed—compatible with the life of Jesus narrated by Maria Valtorta, with Jesus' age of 1737 weeks at his death. Although this Crucifixion date is hardly considered by scholars, we have shown that it could allow to reconcile the Synoptics and John on the Last-Supper chronological setting.

Precise dates can also be associated with the massacre of the Innocents, the Epiphany and the Baptism of Jesus, even though Maria Valtorta never explicitly reports any date. Thus, beyond her knowledge, her narration has a built-in precise chronology of Jesus' life and its connections with John the Baptist.

Based on our analysis of the chronological issues discussed in this article, we are confident—although ours is a conjecture, but well grounded—in having proposed reliable dates of the major events of the lives of Jesus of Nazareth and John the Baptist.

As we have observed in our previous articles concerning the testable data found in Maria Valtorta's literary work, the verification of the origin of this hidden and coherent chronological background is beyond science and beyond the scope of this article. Nevertheless, our results should stimulate new theological research for explaining the presence of historical information and many chronological details about Jesus' life in mystical writings, beyond the awareness and skills of the writer.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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