

The Divine Sonship of Christ

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"The Lord Himself shall give you a sign: behold a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son, and call his name Emmanuel"—Isaiah 7:14

PART TWO

LUKE'S genealogy is a little more obscure than Matthew's, but not a whit less fatal to the Josephite theory. Luke begins at the opposite end from Matthew. He traces the line backward, while Matthew does it forward. He begins with Jesus at the time of his baptism by John, and says —

"Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age (being as was SUPPOSED) the son of Joseph."

Now, why does Luke employ the word "supposed"? If, as Josephism hints, Luke believed Jesus to be the natural son of Joseph, why does he not say so, in the simple unequivocal style observed in all the other cases, instead of introducing a word which suggests doubt and mystery?

Who "supposed" that he was the son of Joseph? And why was it the subject of "supposition"? Does not the existence of a "supposition" show that a contrary idea had been asserted, namely, that Jesus was not the son of Joseph in a natural sense, but "Son of God"?

Does it not show that there was a diversity of opinion existing at the time of Luke's writing? Supposition only comes into play where uncertainty exists; but according to Josephism, there was no uncertainty; "for," say the Josephites —

"All the Jews believed and knew Jesus to be the son of Joseph, and the evangelists did not contradict it."

Yet, according to Luke, "supposition" was active at the time of Christ's baptism, on the subject of his paternity. This "supposition" could not be as to **which** man was his father, for his supposed father was well-known, and all his family. The supposition therefore could only relate to the question of human versus divine paternity; and Luke treats the popular view of the question as a "supposition," in the sense of an idle and wrong supposition.

Luke's words prove that to his (Luke's) private information, Jesus was not the son of Joseph in a natural sense; for in penning this public record of his genealogy in which he is bound to admit the legal relation of Jesus to Joseph, he inserts a parenthesis which fences off the popular idea of his being the natural son of Joseph. It is as much to say —

"The common idea was, that he was the real son of Joseph, but this is just a popular delusion; for though the legal son of Joseph, he was the product of creative power, through Mary, the wife of Joseph."

This is the effect of Luke's parenthesis.

On no other principle can the occurrence of such a parenthesis be rationally accounted for.

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THERE is another, and, if possible, more conclusive aspect of the matter. A glance at the original suggests that Luke's brief parenthesis is wrongly marked in the Common Version; and that it really includes the whole supposition alluded to. Luke's words literally translated, would read—

"And he (Jesus) was beginning about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed, a son of Joseph) of Heli."

The words "which was the son," that precede "of Heli," in the common version, are NOT IN THE ORIGINAL. Their introduction changes the significance of the verse.

It makes it allege that Joseph was the son of Heli (Mary's father), whereas he was the son of Jacob; and it destroys the connection between Jesus and Heli, which it is evidently Luke's intention to point out.

Paraphrasing Luke's words, so as to express their evident significance, they would read—

"Jesus was at this time about thirty, and the general supposition was that he was the natural son of Joseph, but he was, in reality, genealogically of Heli."

Genealogy being only reckoned by males, Heli, Mary's father, would be put for Mary in stating his natural extraction.

This harmonizes all the apparent difficulties in the case, and destroys the proof which Josephites see in Luke's genealogy.

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LUKE'S genealogy is not the genealogy of Joseph, but of Heli, Mary's father, and Joseph's father-in-law. If Luke gives the genealogy of Joseph, Matthew does not; for the lines are different.

Josephites allege them both to be that of Joseph. How can this be, when they are different? Josephites must reject one, for two conflicting pedigrees cannot be right.

But there is no necessity for rejecting either. One is the genealogy of Mary, and the other of Joseph; and both are essential to show that, notwithstanding the departure from the natural order of things in Christ's begettal, Jesus is still the son of David, and heir to his throne.

Luke does not state (as the Josephites say) that "several spurious gospels had then begun to be circulated." He simply observes that many had attempted a narrative of the facts of Christ's life, and that he, having authentic and personal knowledge of the whole matter, had been induced to put forth his account.

It is probable that the "gospels" in circulation were feeble, and it might be, in some particulars, inaccurate; but surely it is a tremendous liberty to take in the discussion of a subject of such momentous importance as this to suggest without the shadow of proof, that the miraculous conception of Jesus was a feature in these current gospels which Luke wrote to correct!

It is true that "the prophecies in the Old Testament" represent the Messiah as a prophet like unto Moses, a son of David, a man of sorrows, and so on, but these representations are in no way incompatible with the fact that the method by which he was constituted a man and a son of David, was by supernatural begettal, constituting him son of God as well as son of David.

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THE prediction of Isaiah cannot be harmonized with the Josephite theory—

"The Lord himself shall give you a sign: BEHOLD, A VIRGIN shall conceive and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

Some say "a virgin" should be translated "a young woman."

Where would the "sign" be then? What would there be in the nature of sign or wonder in a young woman conceiving? Is it such a rare and extraordinary event for a young woman to conceive, that its occurrence would be "a sign?"

And where IS the "young woman" that has born Emmanuel? How is Jesus, if the natural son of Joseph and Mary, Emmanuel—GOD WITH US?

If Jesus was a mere man, he was not "God with us." If he were God with us by simply having the Spirit, then all the prophets and apostles were "God with us," and there was no meaning at all in Christ being called Emmanuel.

But while discussing the suggestion that "virgin" may be changed to "young woman," we are bound to affirm its utter inadmissibility from a philological point of view.

The word (**almah**) translated "virgin" in the passage quoted from Isaiah, is never translated "young woman," and never used in any sense other than that of an unmarried female.

This may be seen by reference to the only places of its occurrence, which are Gen. 24:43; Ex. 2:8; Ps. 68:25; Pro. 30:19; Song. 1:3; 6:8; Isa. 7:14.

The word most frequently used for virgin (**bethoolah** — Gen. 24:16), is not the one used in Isa. 7:14. This is agreed.

The word sometimes translated "young woman" (**nagara**—Ruth 4:12.) is most frequently rendered "maiden" and "damsel."

It is probably this fact that has suggested the attempt to get rid of Isa. 7:14 as a proof of Christ's miraculous conception, by the assertion that "young woman" (married or unmarried) is interchangeable with the "virgin" of the passage in question.

The suggestion is entirely false. The word means a young virgin female in the absolute sense; and we can only eliminate this idea from the passage by deleting the word, **almah** and substituting **nagara**. And even then, the unscrupulous critic who would dare upon such a liberty, would not be much assisted in his designs, for even the substituted word would more naturally bear the construction of "virgin" than "young woman."

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THERE are those who say that the explicit narratives of Matthew and Luke are spurious additions to the original. This is, of course, essential to the Josephite argument, but lays a terrible onus upon those who take this ground, for the records themselves are prima facie evidence of their genuineness.

It is not sufficient in such a matter to establish a plausible case. The reasons against must be more than equal to the reasons for; they must be crushingly preponderating, for if it is only a case of equal probability, there is room for the attacked theory to be correct, and in that case, general considerations must be allowed to turn the scale.

Now, the Josephite arguments are not of this character; they are precisely of an opposite character. They are vastly inferior to those which establish the genuineness of the assailed narratives, while the general considerations are all on the side of the doctrine which Josephism denies.

These general considerations are of different kinds. First, there is the existence of a belief in the miraculous conception in the first century. This fact destroys the force of any non-belief which existed, so far as such non-belief might be construed unfavourably to the miraculous conception; because the argument on one side would be equally forcible on the other.

If the non-belief of men living at the time is presumptively against the doctrine on the ground that they may be supposed to have had opportunities of ascertaining the truth of the matter, the belief of other men living at the same time and with the same opportunities is of equal weight on the other side; nay, it is of much more weight, for one "yes," on a matter of fact, is worth a thousand "noes."

"Yes," implies a reason and evidence; "no" only indicates the absence of reason and ignorance of evidence. A thousand men ignorant of a thing and unable to appreciate the evidences of it, may say they don't believe it; but is their negative of any value against the positive assertion and arguments of those who know the facts?

Twenty men may come in a court and say of a prisoner, "We don't believe he is guilty," but the evidence of three men who have **witnessed** the fact of his guilt, will blow their opinions to the wind, and bring the jury to a verdict.

Now the fact that **any** number in the first century believed in the miraculous conception, destroys the value of every adverse expression of opinion which Josephites might be able to quote.

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NOTHING is more characteristic of John's epistles than the assertion of the divine sonship of Christ, as against those who denied it by asserting he was the son of Joseph. He says—

"Believe not every spirit; try the spirits whether they are of God; because MANY FALSE PROPHETS ARE GONE OUT INTO THE WORLD" (1 John 4:1).

John therefore recognizes the existence of error in his time. It will not do to quote the opinion of these false prophets as evidence in favor of their opinions. John says—

"We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (4:6).

Now, on the subject of Christ's sonship, he says—

"We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.
"Whoever shall confess that JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD, God dwelleth in him, and he in God" (vs. 14-15).

Those who alleged he was the son of Joseph would come under the implied condemnation of this passage. Every declaration that Christ is the Son of God (and they are numerous throughout the whole New Testament) is a condemnation of those who asserted he was the son of Joseph.

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THE omission of Mark to notice the miraculous conception is no disproof of the miraculous conception. If it is, it would prove that Christ was not born at all, for Mark never mentions the fact, but commences his narrative with the active ministry of Christ.

The same argument applied to Matthew, would disprove the ascension, for Matthew does not mention it.

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AS TO the argument of the omission of the account of the miraculous conception in some early copies of Luke and Matthew, it is without weight. For if a few early copies are without these chapters, a great number have them.

The question to be decided would be: were the chapters in question fraudulently excluded from the **few** copies, or fraudulently introduced into the **many**?

As a question of probability, no sane man would hesitate to pronounce upon it. It would be easier to withdraw them from a few than to introduce them to many.

There is no moral doubt that the fraud was practised in the few copies. In the production of these, those who asserted Christ's purely human birth would purposely omit the chapters that stood in their way. There is early ecclesiastical evidence that this was done.

The internal evidence of the chapters is conclusive in their favor. They are of a piece with the books of which they form an accredited part. The successful perpetration of such an imposition would have been a literary impossibility. The patch would have been visible.